

THE

Manchester

Quarterly

AN ILLUSTRATED JOURNAL

OF

LITERATURE AND ART.



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Manchester Literary Club.

FOUNDED 1862.

The objects of the MANCHESTER LITERARY CLUB are :—

1. To encourage the pursuit of Literature and Art; to promote research in the several departments of intellectual work; and to further the interests of Authors and Artists in Lancashire.
2. To publish from time to time works illustrating or elucidating the literature, art, and history of the county.
3. To provide a place of meeting where persons interested in the furtherance of these objects can associate together.

The methods by which these objects are sought to be obtained are :—

1. The holding of weekly meetings, from October to April, for social intercourse, and for the hearing and discussion of papers.
2. The publication of such papers, at length or abridged, in a Magazine, entitled the *Manchester Quarterly*, as well as in an annual volume of Transactions; and of other work undertaken at the instance of the Club, including a projected series of volumes dealing with local literature.
3. The formation of a library consisting of (a) works by members, (b) books by local writers or relating to the locality, and (c) general works of reference.
4. The exhibition, as occasion offers, of pictures by artist members of the Club.

Membership of the Club is limited to authors, journalists, men of letters, painters, sculptors, architects, engravers, musical composers, members of the learned professions, and of English and foreign universities, librarians, and generally persons engaged or specially interested in literary or artistic pursuits.

The meetings are held at the Grand Hotel, Aytoun Street, every Monday evening during the Session. Each Session opens and closes with a *Conversazione*. There are also occasional Musical and Dramatic Evenings, and a Christmas Supper. During the vacation excursions are held, of which due notice is given.

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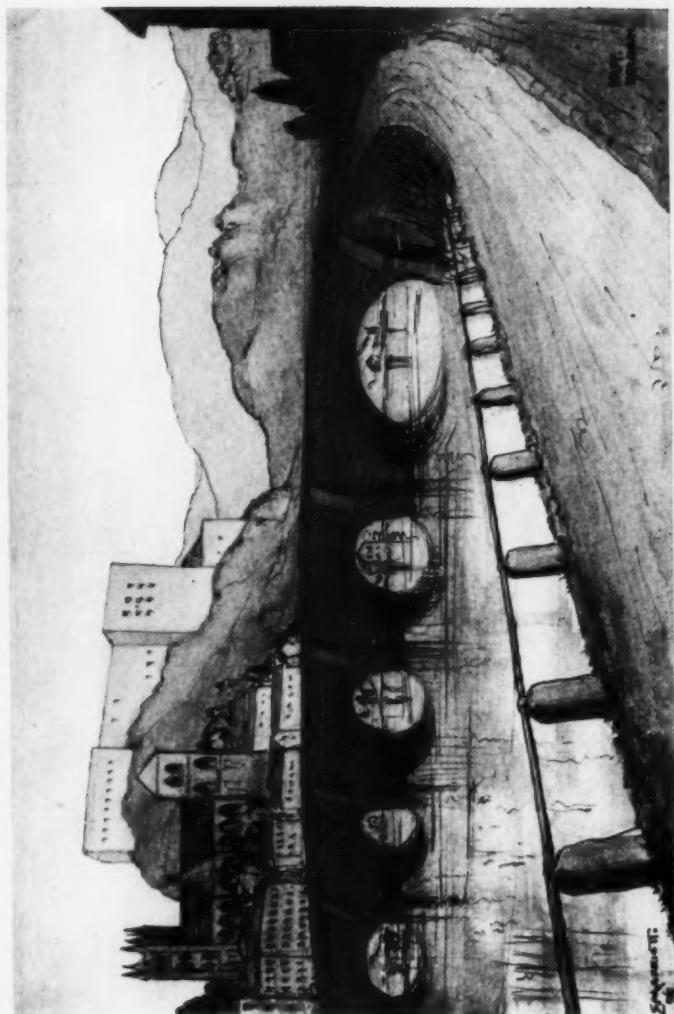
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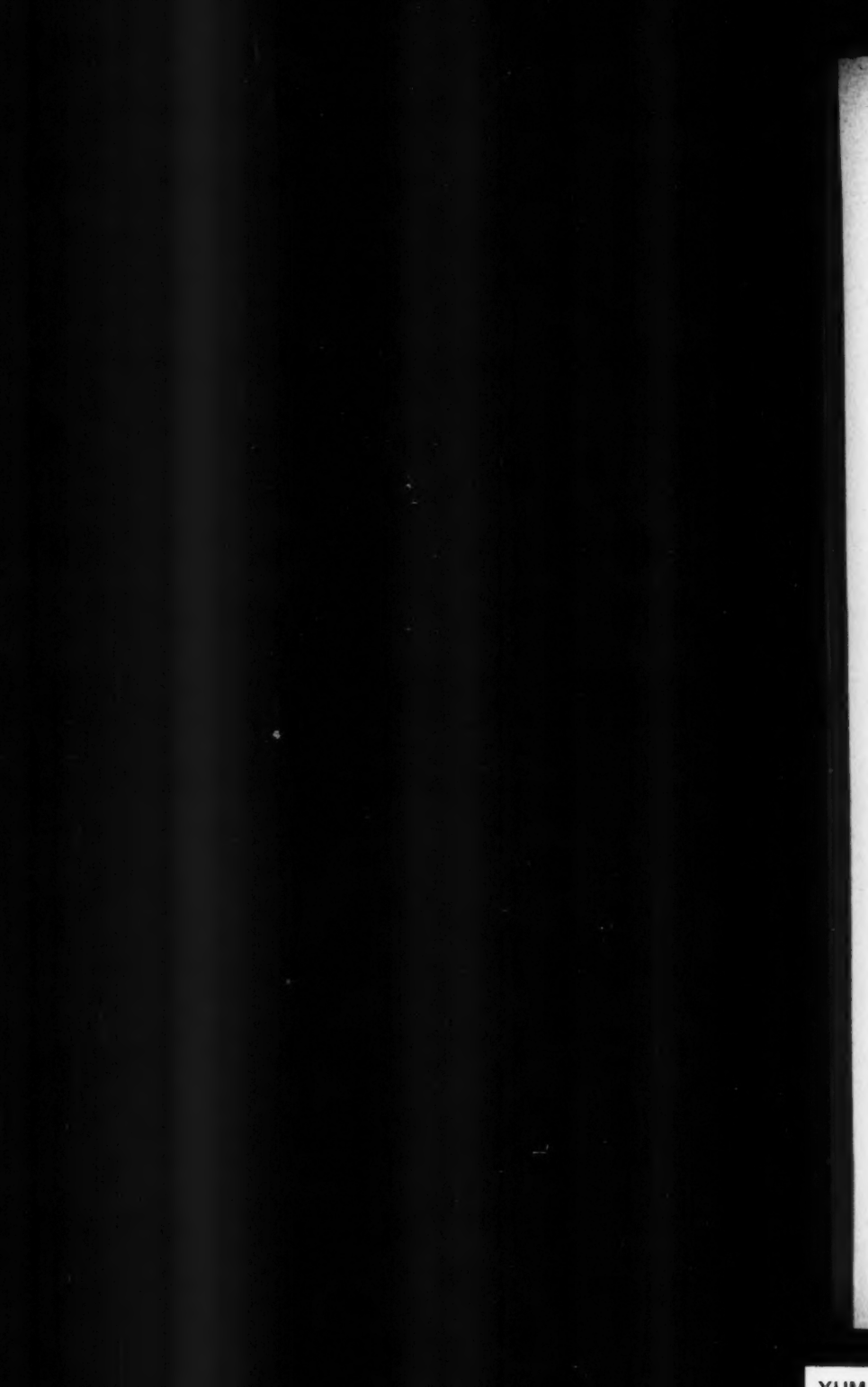
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HUY, BELGIUM

From a Water-colour Drawing by Ernest Marriott





BRUGES AND THE ARDENNES

By ERNEST MARRIOTT.

A FEW years ago three men in search of the picturesque set off for a fortnight's wandering in a tiny continental country with the intention of seeing as much as possible while spending no more than was absolutely necessary. One of them kept a diary and the present narrative is an amplified transcription therefrom.

The pseudonyms of the three heroes of the tale will be as follows:—First, "The Owl," so called because of his wisdom or probably his appearance. Secondly, "Dante," who had the name bestowed upon him because of his infernal imagination and a fancied facial resemblance, or rather nasal similarity, to the immortal Italian. Third, the "Semigerm," who has spent half his life in Germany. Hence his title Semigerm, meaning "half German."

A fortnight before the "expedition" started the Owl burrowed his way out of a mountain of time tables, bills and lists of cheap Belgian hotels and boarding establishments which he had been studying, and upon meeting the Semigerm announced that he intended to spend two weeks meandering about Belgium, that he hoped all expenses of getting there, eating and drinking, sleeping and coming back from there would be covered with a £5 note. The Semigerm immediately said he would accompany him. A week later Dante decided to make a third, and thereupon a discussion of particulars took place.

It was resolved that we should travel as light as possible

A

as we wished to do some tramping about. Each was to take a knapsack and long waterproof cape. Only absolute necessities beyond our sketching materials were to be put into our packs, and with the idea of saving as much room as possible it was decided that one really swagger shaving brush should do duty for all, one razor strop, one collapsible pan for boiling water, and one bootbrush, should serve the three.

From the time of boarding the boat at Hull about 7 p.m. we had a calm passage all the way, and by 7 o'clock the next morning we were in sight of the huge granite quay at Zeebrugge. The long line of Flemish landscape looked as flat as a flatfish and, in the grey morning light, something of the same colour.

We had already acclimatised ourselves to the foreign soil and attuned our ears in the expectancy of foreign speech when on getting into the train for Bruges the crude accents of the country we had left behind broke upon us—undisguised and genuine Lancashire. It was upsetting. Here were we trying hard to feel the poetry of Flanders, which it may be admitted was up to then not very evident, and there were they—a party of Lancashire yokels—bringing us down to earth suddenly like a defective aeroplane. They sang songs and drank from pocket flasks, and their stories and anecdotes were like those of a famous squire—as broad as they were long. Apparently, one of the men had been appointed official diary-keeper, and the reading of his first fruits was the one green spot in the quagmire which made us forgive them.

"Nah Jim," said one, "read th' diary so far as it's got."

"Right y'are," said Jim. He dug into his pocket and produced a fat book. "Are you all listenin'," he said, glaring round fiercely. A chorus of qualified affirmatives answered him. Then he started reading very rapidly: "Sat'dy, September 8th, 1906. Got to 'Ull about 5 o'clock. 'Ad a good feed. Got on tug and then got on steamer. Seth lost 'is 'at on the boat and after messin' about all

over the blooming place came acrost it. Got to Zeebrugge at 7 o'clock Sunday, and then got on train." Jim looked proud of his feat and put the book back in his pocket.

"Crimes," observed his immediate neighbour, "any — fool could a wrote that much."

Our own sentiments were similar in feeling but our adjective might not have been so lurid in colour.

The train sped along through the flat landscape, now and then giving us glimpses of tiny canals of green water and rows of pollarded willows. We were rid of our Lancashire encumbrances when the train entered Bruges.

Within a few minutes after arriving three reputations fell crashing into pieces. There was a terrible fiasco which was the result of a misunderstanding. Each, it seemed, had been under the impression that the other two knew enough French for all practical purposes and had not bothered to rub up what little he had learned. It turned out that each had been mistaken about the other two. Having a number of addresses of places to stay at in Bruges, we decided to take the first on the list—Madame Blank, No. — Rue Nord du Sablon. Soon we were at the address, discovering it to be a shop where church ornaments were sold. We marched inside and rang a bell. A thin man with a pointed beard came into the shop and greeted us with "Bon jour, messieurs." Unanimously we returned "Bon jour" and felt that British supremacy once again had been vindicated. The man waited for us to continue, but none seemed to care about pushing himself forward. We looked at each other and the man looked at us. Dante suddenly took his courage in both hands, drew a breath, and articulated something neither we nor the man understood. Then Dante looked at the Owl and said encouragingly, "Go on, old chap, this is *your* show." The Owl looked pained and said "I thought *you* were going to do all the talking." The Semigerm began to chuckle until the others turned on him and requested that he should have a shot himself. He thought awhile,

became convulsed in the face, and at last evolved a weird sentence which sounded like German. The man in the beard looked puzzled. By this time Dante had remembered a bit more French. We wanted to ask the man if this was the house we were searching for; if so, could he put us up there. Dante tried in French, the Semigerm in German, and the Owl in Dutch. The man's face brightened. He went behind the counter and produced some brass articles, laying them out for our inspection. We rejected the suggestion that we had come to buy and tried again. In about a quarter of an hour he understood and then informed us that Madame Blank had removed.

We went to the next house on our list where the tariff was a little lower; we wanted to be economical, so in spite of our suspicions that the charge of "4 francs a day inclusive" might not be all that we imagined, or rather that it might, we ventured it. Dante took the honours of the language this time. A few years ago he dazzled the Latin Quarter of Paris, and his French was gradually coming back to him.

After breakfast we stroll round the city to make a general acquaintance with the place. We visit the Hospital of St. Jehan to see the Memling pictures. Inside the Church of the Hospital it is dark and extremely impressive. Three nuns in black are kneeling on low chairs near to the altar rails. Through the gloom a rich light from the stained glass windows streams down the altar. Not a sound comes from the nuns and the silence is intense. When the eye becomes accustomed to the darkness it discovers here and there little gaudy shrines and brazen ornaments. On the walls are some large framed religious pictures whose originally bright colours have toned down into mellow harmonies. Near the porch are hung a number of wax casts of legs, mouths, crippled arms, deformed hands and strings of teeth. It seems there is a belief that a cure for any ailment can be effected by hanging up in the Church a wax reproduction of the

malady and paying so much for prayers to be said for the relief of the sufferer. We stand still for some time—the nuns have not moved nor made any sound and the silence is becoming deadly. The black dresses of the kneeling figures fall symmetrically and naturally into triangular shapes with the head as the apex. They seem like great brooding moths hanging on the chairs with wings folded as if in sleep. Howsoever gently we try to walk about the Church the great floor tiles give back with redoubled sound the noise of our footsteps. It is cold and chilly; there is an odour of stale incense everywhere. Those pallid waxen horrors, imitations and embodiments of disease, suggest human butchery and mortuary relics laid out for identification. We have had enough and are glad to get outside.

In the afternoon we did several things, but they have not been diarised. The verb "to diarise" is our own invention. It means to enter matter into a diary. The matter entered thereupon becomes "diarised." One can go on multiplying the results to be got from this verb. As an instance "Diarision" means derisive laughter evoked by reading or listening to the foolish contents of diaries. As I have said, I cannot relate the wonderful adventures which happened that afternoon as we have forgotten what they were. We can, however, remember that later on, after a stroll along the Quay Vert, we had some beautiful pale yellow lager served to us in slender tapering wine glasses. That was memorable. It was more like an ancient and mellow wine than anything else, cool and refreshing with its sparkling clear gold appealing as much to the eye as to the palate.

In the evening we sit down at a little table outside the Panier d'Or Café, in the great cobbled market place, listening to the band. The gigantic Belfry opposite looms large and overtopping against a dark blue sky. In the middle vista of a narrow street leading off from the Grande Place a big orange-coloured moon is climbing

over a fantastic gable. It attracts us away from the café, and we are soon wandering about among the ancient quays and lagoons. This is the Bruges of our imaginings. No other town can possibly suggest more of the true spirit of mediævalism than this antique city of bells and bridges. Its sombre canals with lights mirrored in their inky depths, its whispering poplars and deserted alleys, the crumbling towers of its enormous churches, the many coloured houses with their fanciful stone carvings, its sculptured saints and Madonna's in glass cases built into the walls, and the wrought iron hanging-lamps at street corners throwing their flickering light on the old mellow brickwork, have each of them a contributory mission to the complete scheme which so satisfies and fills the imagination. One assimilates the historical sense of the town almost unconsciously. Bruges remains thoroughly mediæval in spite of the efforts made to modernise it. There is a fascinating charm about an evening ramble here. One has the feeling of being in another century and one would hardly be surprised on turning the next corner to catch sight of flat caps and waving plumes, jerkins and slashed sleeves, daggers, swords and gorgeous mantles. It is a sense of something hidden yet evident, something behind what is actually apparent, a feeling of almost personal contact with the full-blooded life as well as with the mere architectural aspects of the Middle Ages.

The next morning, in going the longest way round to the Beguinage, we arrived in a disreputable part of the town where even the most ordinary decencies of existence seem to be disregarded. Many of the streets in this quarter of the city's outskirts had a heaped up ridge of rubbish and refuse all down the centre of the road. The inhabitants looked dirty and unkempt and their weird little one-storey houses had a hard struggle to discover themselves above the dirt. It was in one of these hog-backed roadways that we had an adventure. We suddenly became aware that a pack of wolves was dogging our

footsteps. Dante, who has a veritable passion for truth without trimmings, will at this point probably affirm that the narrative ceases to be veracious. Let that pass. Some of the greatest men in the world have asked "What is truth?" and received no reply. Therefore what good can we do by arguing about what is, for the purposes of this tale, a totally unnecessary factor? We were tracked by were-wolves then. No amount of scoffing will persuade the Owl and the Semigerm out of this belief. Whenever we looked round we could see their glowing eyes and dripping fangs. They began to howl ominously and we began to walk a little quicker. They gained on us and we were just on the point of being eaten alive when we met a nun who held up a crucifix and behold, a miracle! The yowling ghastly were-wolves were suddenly transformed into a lousy looking terrier and three untidy poodles. Dante avers that the nun did not hold up a crucifix and that they were ordinary dogs all the time. But no good comes of trying to reason with a man who won't believe in miracles, so as far as he was concerned the matter was dropped. The Semigerm and the Owl congratulated each other on the courage and calmness displayed by themselves in a trying situation. Unfortunately for the Semigerm's reputation for valour a good deal of the edge was taken off his bravery by the admission that all the time he thought the wolves would spare him as he was a vegetarian.

After making some very bad sketches of the Beguinage we departed, and in coming away spied a shop where they sold green Flemish pottery and antique brass at absurdly low prices. Dante, who is an enthusiast on old brass of any sort, dashed inside and very nearly purchased a piece big enough to shelter him from the rain. With earnest pleading the other two begged him to consider what the proposed tour in the Ardennes meant and implored him not to spoil the holiday by imposing on the party an incubus which would require a handcart wherever it went. The desire of possession was strong upon him, the metal

had entered deeply into his soul, but by a great effort he restrained himself. The others had received their lesson. Afterwards whenever a brass shop came in sight they placed themselves one on each side of Dante and marched him quickly past.

At night we went again to the Grande Place, and sat under an awning of one of the cafés sipping hot chocolate. It had been raining slightly and the belfry looked dark and gloomy in the night air. One or two cooking stalls were set up at the other side of the square and at each a few loiterers were gathered round the red glow of the open stoves. The cobbles of the market place were black and shining with the wet and they carried the reflection of the fires in long red bars almost down to our feet. There were few people about and as it was not very cheerful sitting in the damp air we went back to our lodgings and ordered an omelette supper. No luck was there however. We found the eggs were not quite respectable and we couldn't eat them. We scorned the foreign yolk and went to bed.

On Tuesday morning Dante and the Owl were awakened from slumber by the martial strains of the Turkish patrol as rendered by the Semigerm upon our bedroom piano. Lest anyone should assume from the mention of the piano that the room must have been of fair size I had better correct the impression by describing the instrument. It was about ten inches long and beautifully decorated with shells. Usually it was kept on the mantelpiece but when we had our little concerts we placed it on the floor in the middle of the room. Incidentally it had eight notes, two of which struck work and lapsed into profound silence the first time we tried a duet. Yet on the whole it was a game little instrument, and while we resided at that house it gave us considerable joy. It responded nobly to our efforts but before we left only three of the notes could answer to the call.

Later on we tried to make some sketches of Bruges but were not very successful owing to the hordes of small boys

who obstructed the view or leaned affectionately on our shoulders.

In the afternoon we ascended to the top of the Belfry. It is a fearful task. You crawl up flight after flight of stone steps, then you come to a narrow wooden spiral stairway with a dangling rope instead of a handrail. From here upwards it is quite dark all the way, and after climbing seemingly for years you get to the top. The view repays one for the trouble. Bruges looks like a plain of red tiles, broken here and there by the tall towers of the churches. There is a fine wind that tugs at you through the open stone windows, a cold clear breeze which is mightily invigorating to the lungs. While we were at the top the carillon played within a few feet of our heads. Such a deafening jangling and banging it was and the wind seemed to blow the sound out all over the earth. To our eyes, used as they were to the sight of old stone blackened and begrimed in our native city, it seemed incredible that this new looking stonework of the belfry belonged to mediæval times. A closer examination, however, reveals that it is much weather-beaten. It is the natural sulphur-yellow colour of the stone which makes it delusively new in appearance.

On flat earth again, Dante lured the others to take a particular brand of Moselle, of which his knowledge seemed peculiar and intimate. "To appreciate it fully and realise the subtle charm of this drink," he said, "you must *roll* it on the tongue." They watched him rolling it and tried to imitate, but were not successful. The Semigerm said briefly that he preferred to get it over quickly like quinine, and the Owl, after gulping the bitter draught down, said nothing, but looked reproachfully at Dante in a dignified and disgusted silence.

We were not satisfied with our lodgings. Of course we could not expect luxury at the price we were paying. Still, as we were never sure whether the meat served to us had in its living state formed portions of an animal which

chewed the cud in green pastures or trotted between shafts in Flemish streets, we resolved to proceed further and see if we could fare better. We decided to leave after breakfast and found, when the bill was presented, that Madame wanted to charge us for an extra day. We refused to be swindled, whereupon she threatened to call in the gendarmes. We welcomed the suggestion and begged her to fetch them at once. She compromised by charging us 2 francs each for a light breakfast of coffee and rolls. We agreed with that, settled the bill, and went by rail to Brussels feeling very joyful all the way as Madame in her greed had forgotten to charge us for the drinks we had while staying at the house, the cost of which totalled roughly the amount of the breakfast swindle.

On Thursday morning a painful discovery awaited us. Madame had scored after all. The mutual shaving brush—an expensive badger—had been left at Bruges! It was a dramatic moment. Our sentiments in the particular medium they were expressed would have no interest for a Literary Club but they might be valuable to a Philological Society. I will report nothing that was said about the loss of the brush, but we have tender recollections of that day's latherings and can draw illuminating comparisons between the respective merits of a camel hair paint brush, a tooth brush and a nail brush as instruments for the purpose. The Semigerm wished to try the boot polishing brush but he was forcibly prevented. Poor Semigerm! that morning the foundations of his belief in communism were profoundly shaken.

We spent the day in seeing the usual sights, and feeling tired of the town unanimously voted for continuing our journey, the same night, on to Namur. As the train left Brussels behind, the scenery began to change rapidly. Clusters of white farm houses came into view and fields of rich soil rolled past, then clumps of pine trees, small valleys and forests of fir. We reached Namur about eight o'clock in the evening and after a good supper sat on the

roof of the hotel smoking contentedly, watching nothing happening in the streets.

On the morrow preparations were made to start our tramp. It was suggested by the Semigerm and seconded by Dante that suitable and economical meals might be made from various sorts of dried fruit which would be easy to carry with us. The Owl had his doubts but said nothing. Half a pound of dried apricots, a pound of preserved apple-cake and a pound of raisins thereupon were purchased. The Semigerm began a learned disquisition on the amount of nourishment which is packed to the square inch in raisins, but he was politely asked to make his remarks as brief as possible.

We followed the left bank of the Meuse and came to a halt for our midday meal by some big stones at a bend of the river. What the Owl termed "rabbit food" was produced, and the three of us made valiant attempts to get it down. The raisins were dry, the apricots were hard, and the apple-cake was unspeakable. A silence fell on the party. A little later the Owl's cup of happiness overflowed. Within ten minutes of this miserable meal the three of us were sitting down to a civilised luncheon at an hotel near by. Never since have Dante and the Semigerm spoken of raisins or dried fruit. During the day we passed a number of wayside shrines, and upon enquiry were informed that these were put up wherever a murder had been committed. Life along the banks of the Meuse is simple in its manifestations. The usual sights are stray fishermen, horses with tinkling bells, pulling long red and green barges, and blue bloused peasants chopping trees or gathering blackberries.

About seven o'clock we came to Yvoir where we had a dinner so good that it detained us until the sun had gone down. We wished to get to Dinant that evening and, as it was a clear starlit night, we felt quite confident of doing so. Soon after starting, however, we had to strike matches and study the map by their light. In the dark

we couldn't tell whether we were on the right road. For an hour or so we blundered on. Passing through a forest we came out into open ground and presently saw a shaft of yellow light striking through an open cottage doorway into the blue dark. A peasant came out and, on hearing of our difficulty, politely offered to shew us the road leading to Dinant. After coming a considerable distance he left us with directions which we thought we understood. Following out his instructions we tramped hopefully along and in half an hour found the road narrowing. It became rougher and then dwindled into a pathway which lost itself in the middle of a field. Striking across in the direction of a twinkling light we tumbled into a ditch of thistles, discovered the railway line at the other side, and almost at the same time got mixed up with the signal wires which ran close to the ground. Our contact with these set some bells ringing. The sound inspired us. We skipped across the lines, negotiated a barbed wire fence, fell into a small brook and out of it on to a broad highway which was gleaming whitely in the starlight. We surmised that this was the road we were in search of and another hour's walking proved us correct. All Dinant had gone to bed when we got there and it took a good deal of knocking to waken up the proprietor of the first hotel we came to.

On Saturday morning, while only half-awake, the Owl suddenly discovered that waves were breaking over the bed in which he was lying. He opened his eyes and saw what seemed to be an inland sea stretching away into the distance. The Semigerm was perched on the farthest knob of the bedrail trying to get out of reach of the spray and yelling frantically at somebody. When properly awake the Owl was relieved to find that it was not so bad as he thought. As a matter of fact it was Dante trying to wash himself in a hand basin placed on a chair in the middle of the room. His usual method, only on this occasion he had surpassed himself. The floor was a great

shining pool, and the motion of his hands endeavouring to get some of the water to his face sent it flying over everything, so that soon there was precious little left in the basin. We requested him to mop some of the lake up and let us get out of bed. He said it was all right; he had only been having a wash. What were we worrying about? Cuttingly we replied that it was obvious he had been washing the floor, the beds, the pictures, even the wardrobe, that he had succeeded in decorating the walls and part of the ceiling with an eccentric and irregular pattern, but we could not possibly believe that he had been washing his own person. Sarcasm, unfortunately, is lost on him so we blotted a portion of the linoleum dry with some of his spare socks.

From Dinant we started about ten o'clock. It was somewhat grey and threatening at first and by the time half-a-dozen miles had been covered the rain came in showers, with a blustering wind blowing down through the gaps in the hills and cutting up the surface of the river.

We had our dinner under what little shelter could be got from a small clump of pines, and as the miles retreated behind us the landscape became much wilder in character. Our waterproof cloaks were not the success we anticipated. They ruckled up above the knees with the action of walking and the rain dribbled off into our clothing. Presently the heavy showers became continuous and the cloaks began to let the water through in various places. We were soaked to the skin and our feet squelched in our boots as we walked. No shelter of any sort could we find. On we went plodding stolidly and soddently, the water pouring in tiny cascades all over us. Newly made streams gushed across the road and the vegetation bent under the heavy pelting of the rain. There was no sign of abatement and after a while we became almost scornful of it.

The Hotel de la Meuse at Waulzort eventually received what must have appeared to be three pedestrian dishcloths.

After hiring a room and taking off our things we wondered what we were to do with ourselves until they were dry. We had not a change of outer garments so we sat about the bedroom smoking pipe after pipe to pass the time. An hour went by, then we sent for the clothes. They were still sodden so they had to go back. Another hour passed and again we had to send them back. This time the maid informed us that dinner would be served at seven o'clock. Our watches pointed to a few minutes to that hour. What were we to do? Go dinnerless? No! we were famishing. Put on our wet things? Decidedly not! It was a facer. Then the Owl's wisdom shone forth. He suggested that each should put on a clean collar and tie and go down in our pyjama suits. "Walk in as if we owned the earth," he said, "and the people will think we are wearing the latest fashion in summer clothing." As it seemed probable there would be very few visitors staying in the Hotel the plan was adopted.

Now, if a man of the present day falls into an acute dolour when he gazes at the sombre clothing to which Fashion condemns him and his neighbours, and yearns to be arrayed in brightly coloured robes as were the men of other centuries, he has open to him this device for the satisfaction of his soul. Custom and public opinion forbid the wearing of gay costume in the streets but in the intimacy of his bedchamber he may don a sleeping suit of wondrous hue and let his fancy run riot in the opulent colours and hilarious patterns of pyjamas!

Who can say how many men avail themselves of this way of escape. The number is greater probably than most people would think. The dejected-looking city clerk, drab in the day, may in the night time become an apparition of delight; the chubby alderman, tightly buttoned in black while at business, might in the privacy of his sleeping chamber strut about like a brilliant if somewhat plump bird of Paradise.

Concerning ourselves it may be stated that the Owl's

sleeping suit was certainly startling with its broad blue and white lines, and Dante's pyjamas had stripes of bright pink and green which seemed in furious contest which should shout the louder, while the pattern on the Semigerm's garments sometimes gave him insomnia.

The three of us were wearing some knitted woollen bedroom slippers that one of the maids had considerably pushed in at the bedroom door, and had we been able to effect a substitute for the fancy silk bows which tied them to the feet we would have done so to temper their conspicuous femininity. But the dinner gong had sounded and we didn't want to walk in last if we could help it. None but the brave deserve the fare. We marched boldly in and were appalled to find ourselves landed in the middle of a dining room containing thirty or forty ladies and gentlemen, some of them in evening dress. Making a rush for the nearest seats we hastily sat down and studied the menu cards with concentrated interest. When seated we felt there was not so much of us shewing and in a while plucked up enough courage to look round at the other visitors. What they thought we never knew but we guessed from the half suppressed smiles and subdued titterings that, as the Semigerm phrased it, "We had fairly fluttered the dovecote." It was not until we caught sight of ourselves in a big looking-glass that we realised how we must have staggered the other guests. Had we only blacked our faces the illusion of a small band of Christy Minstrels would have been complete.

The rain came down all evening with interminable and melancholy persistence so we stopped at Waulzort for the night.

On Sunday our clothes still felt damp but we thought we could walk off what chill remained in them. It was a beautiful sunlit morning and the roads were drying up. The river, deep and lucid green in colour, is very broad just here and takes many pleasant turns and twists, whilst the verdurous hills come right down in gentle slopes to its

margins. It took longer than we anticipated to walk off the damp feeling of the half dried clothes and clammy boots, but by the time Hermenton was reached we were glowing with warmth and ready for our midday lunch. It was a tiny wayside inn where we had a frugal meal of fruit—fresh, not dried—bread and cherry wine. There were no plates and we ate off a scrupulously clean wooden table while the woman of the house bombarded us with questions. We left her still talking and as we got nearer towards the French frontier we passed so many wayside shrines that we were forced to conclude that nearly half the population of Belgium must have been murdered at one time or another. We crossed the frontier into France without being seen and felt rather disappointed that it had not been an experience with consequences.

The road began to climb higher and the line of hills in the distance, which up to now had been a rich blue, suddenly turned black. The flood of sunlight ebbed away and left the country gloomy and wild looking. A high wind got up, swinging the branches of the trees and whirling leaves and twigs in our faces. Soon a heavy shower sent us into the nearest Auberge for shelter. We ordered three penny glasses of local wine and watched some peasants who were dancing to an accordion in the bar-room. When they were tired of whirling round they sang songs for us. Then we sang songs for them and the whole place exuded friendliness. More pennyworths of local wine were ordered but the innkeeper, however, would not let us pay for ours—we seemed to have captured his fancy. Feeling very happy we stayed longer than we ought to have done. The time had passed quicker than we thought, and it was with reluctance we parted from our country acquaintances and struck off down a tree-bordered road.

Givet, which we reached at twilight, is a small but important frontier town with a large fortress crowning a great rock on the left bank of the Meuse. It was posi-

tively overflowing with little French soldiers in baggy red trousers and blue tunics, and as we did not intend to stay there it was suggested that on going through the town we might give the Frenchmen a lesson in smart military marching. We pulled ourselves together when passing the barracks, puffed out our chests, got into step, and went swinging through the streets in what we imagined was the acme of military style. The Semigerm, who is almost as big a liar as the Owl, declared that he could see glances of envy on every face and that while half-a-dozen sergeants burst into tears, two officers committed suicide in the middle of the road behind us!

Almost immediately outside the forbidding stone gateway at the end of the town, the road makes away from the river and up into the hills. We kept climbing higher, catching now and then a glimpse of the water which soon became just a shining streak in the valleys below. The rain came on again in showers. In an interval the fires of sunset burst through the dull clouds in a sullen yellow glow. Against the glare a row of gaunt pine trees to the right of us stood out black like the bars of a firegrate, and the rainpools in the desolate road which rolls along the hilltops for miles seemed as if they had been filled with liquid gold.

About seven o'clock we began to descend, and welcome signs of human habitation came into sight. Then we arrived at the little town of which we shall now and for ever speak with the wildest enthusiasm—Vireux-Mohaln of blessed memory. We dignify it thus not on account of its aspect, which was by no means imposing, not because of its historical interest, which is negligible, not on account of its inhabitants, who were mostly uncivil, but because and in joyous recollection of a noble and magnificent dinner.

Our introduction to the town was not a promising prelude to the famous feast we had there. It is an out of the way place where the inhabitants speak a fearsome

dialect. At first we could get neither food nor drink. At every place we tried they seemed suspicious. Whether it was our unusual clothing, our knapsacks or our cloaks that disturbed them we cannot say, but they would have nothing to do with us. They shook their heads and shut their doors. We tried all the inns we could find but with the same ignominious result, and we felt very hungry and tired, having had little to eat since breakfast. Finally we went across the river to try our luck on the other side. Here, just as we were giving up hope, we found on the verge of the town a small hostel which we call the Inn of the Silver Moon. Its real name shall be betrayed to no one for it is altogether too choice and charming a place to be made known to and desecrated by the many. The host, a jovial Frenchman of Falstaffian proportions, greeted us heartily. "Did we want to stop the night? Certainly we should, in the most comfortable bedrooms he had got!" Did we want dinner? We should have the finest in Vireux-Mohaln if we would give him but a little time to add something special to what he was already preparing! Meanwhile we must take off our wet boots and his wife would lend us warm slippers. This was something like a welcome. We sat in the big jolly old fashioned kitchen highly pleased with ourselves and watching the preparations for the meal.

It is the recollection of that dinner that decided us to conceal the name of the place of its creation.

Were my pen equal to the task of describing that feast and were I base enough to publish the name of the Inn the tidings assuredly would spread. It would become world-famous, and gluttons, gourmets and epicures soon would be scuttling from all parts of Europe in never ending streams to Vireux-Mohaln.

The setting of the scene was as admirable as the dinner. A quaint old room with a solid oak flooring, panelled walls and an oval table illuminated with candles in gleaming

brass candlesticks. What could have suited better the dishes that followed?

The big bowls of clear broth with small squares of toast swimming therein, the grilled trout fresh from the river, the crisp light golden omelettes, those ruddy slices of beef and those delicate creamy potatoes boiled with parsley. Wonderful roast snipe and cuts of lean ham with cold green salad, that positively heavenly woodcock pie. Then the puddings and sweet trifle with heaped up creamy foam, the juicy pears and peaches and the purple grapes, and to crown all, the large bottles of local wine which were to blend all these good things and mingle them harmoniously together.

To his everlasting credit the Semigerm cast away the mantle of vegetarianism and delivered his reputation into the hands of the others. His behaviour for a quondam fruit and herb nibbler was pronounced unspeakable, but one of the finest sights of the meal was the thrilling anticipatory gleam in Dante's eyes as he ruthlessly destroyed with his knife the delicate crater-walls of pastry which had been builded with such high art over a dish of cooked apricots.

Some captious reader may think it vulgar to rave thus about food. Let him tramp the distance we had covered, feel as hungry, and meet with such a dinner as was ours on that immortal night, and instead of degrading him it will make him a poet.

As I have said, I cannot do justice to that banquet. The food was so tender, so satisfying, so delicately cooked and so charmingly presented to the eye that were I to read a detailed description even to a club whose members are noted for their asceticism and interest in things of the spirit I should at the finish of the narration raise my head and see around me a number of human beings staring with fascinated eyes, and mouths dribbling with desire.

It is the reward of those who tread unbeaten tracks to

stumble accidentally upon places such as the Inn of the Silver Moon. For us it will be one of the memories that fade not. We have sworn ourselves to secrecy regarding its exact whereabouts and those who would make personal acquaintance with the miraculous hostel must discover it for themselves. It took us some time to get over our astonishment at the wonderful culinary resources displayed at the old fashioned little inn. But a bigger surprise was in store when the bill was put before us the next morning. It was as follows: Dinner 2 francs each, bed 1 franc and breakfast 1 franc! Three and sixpence each. Heavens! and no mention made of the wine. We pointed out the omission to our host but he only smiled and waved his hand dismissing the matter.

The rain, which had been coming down heavily in the night, had by now degenerated into a steady drizzle and there seemed no promise of a break. We decided to get back to Givet, take train to Namur, and from there strike off down the river in the opposite direction to see if we could get away from the wet weather. The train ran out of the rain zone as we had hoped, so at Namur we took the right bank of the Meuse and started off towards Huy. The rocky scenery with its great clumps of poplars fluttering their leaves in the sunshine was very pleasing after the wet and somewhat arid landscape we had recently been traversing and we felt in good spirits.

Towards evening we passed through the village of Selayn where a fête was in progress. In an open square unbarked poles were set up at short distances connected with festoons of leaves and hung with lanterns. A rude wooden stage held musicians playing lustily for the peasants who were dancing themselves red in the face.

Every house was lit up and decorated and the noise of accordions sounded from all quarters. Staying the night at Andenne we reached Huy the following evening and put up at an inn called The Black Sheep.

We stayed at Huy for a day, making sketches of the

more ancient parts of the town and strolling about its outskirts. In the evening we began to reckon up our money to see whether we should be able to finish out the holiday and keep within the limit of expenses predicated at the beginning. As events turned out the fortnight's holiday inclusive of everything cost us slightly less than £5 each.

We felt that we should like to spend a few more days at Bruges before boarding the boat for home, so we decided to start to return there the following day, tramping half way along the other bank of the Meuse and taking the train for the remainder. We lost our way in most enjoyable scenery, and at the end of the day succeeded in getting a train from Bas-oha to Namur, whence we proceeded to Bruges.

Bruges was our first impression of Belgium and our last. This time we lodged in the street of the Golden Hand at a large old-fashioned house full of antique furniture and presided over by a delightful and interesting lady who seemed to worship the old town.

It is the image of this ancient crumbling city that rises up most persistently. Its silent canals and fantastic houses, its cobbled streets and its black robed priests and nuns, whose sable habiliments supply just the right contrast to the rich colour of the buildings, all make clear pictures in the mind. But above all the most impressive feature of Bruges is its bells.

The bell-towers are high up and their sounds are diluted before reaching the ear. They toll continually day and night. The Belfry carillon clashes out the quarters of the hour. Close to, there is a melancholy chime which is almost continuous. Breaking into these comes an intermittent clang which, though not strictly musical, yet has a peculiar virtue by reason of its strangeness. After each hour has struck cascades of tunes from several steeples follow each other or wrangle musically together. At the times of service all the churches break out at once with

their warning notes, and at long but regular intervals through the day there vibrates over the city an irresistible boom from an old tower. The sound is long drawn out and of an extraordinary deep tone. It gives one the sense of something inevitable, and in a strange way suggests bygone experience of a curiously remote and personal happening of mysterious and solemn nature. Interweaving all these sounds, which are by no means loud, there is a mellow jangle which at times seems to come from afar and at other times from close to. A running rippling mixture of tunes almost indistinguishable which melts and flows into the general stream of sound.

One abstracts from this melody a feeling which is perhaps that of sadness, yet one would not wish it away. Bruges would not be itself without its bells. They speak eloquently of its gorgeous and turbulent past. Its bygone wars and wickednesses, its arts and crafts and its commerce, its sorcerers and its saints, its martyrs and devoted worshippers find a living proclamatory voice in the tongues and clappers which are so busy in the upper air of the towers and spires of Bruges.

Once upon a time stately galleons were warped up a narrow inlet from the sea until they lay just without the city gates. It was when this canal became silted up with sand in 1489 that the mould of commercial decay began to settle slowly but increasingly upon the town. Trade received a heavy blow and languished, and it is probably due to the apathy of the inhabitants that Bruges has become such a beautiful city of the past. It is impossible to regret its lapse from commercial prosperity. Had the town continued to flourish it would no longer possess its quiet ghost-haunted quays and plaintive bells, there would not now be the reflected images of fifteenth century architecture trembling in its many green mirrors.

Attempts have been made recently to restore the city to its former commercial supremacy by constructing a new

harbour at the end of the canal, but it seems as if the fates themselves are fighting to preserve Bruges in its present delightful decadence, "silently expressing old mortality." History has repeated itself, and the news that the waterway connecting Bruges with the coast is silting up will cause no pang in the hearts of those who consider modern improvements in such a city to be almost iniquitous.

In many aspects pathetic in its sad tranquillity, Bruges touches the spirit, seeming at times to be the very incarnation of romance. Glass-cased and built into the ancient walls those numerous effigies of the Virgin bear in their hands tiny scrolls inscribed, "I am the Immaculate." The lover of the town feels that Bruges, though like every other city, suffering the existence of occasional foul spots, might with justice claim the Virgin's motto for its enchantingly decayed architectural beauties, and not solely to Italian Ravenna would he let the poet apply the famous line, "A rose-red city half as old as time."



MILTON'S "AREOPAGITICA."

By WILLIAM E. A. AXON.

WE do not know where it was that John Milton met George Thomasson the bookseller who during the long struggle between Charles I. and his Parliament diligently collected all the books and pamphlets issued on both sides of that memorable controversy, but on one occasion the poet gave him a small quarto pamphlet of forty-two pages. The busy bookseller always adding to the collection, which is now one of the treasures of the British Museum, wrote on it the words "Ex dono authoris" and the date November 24, 1644, and thus we know the precise date of the appearance of the "Areopagitica." The poet himself tells us that he wrote this tract "in order to deliver the press from the restraints with which it was encumbered; that the power of determining what was true and what was false, what ought to be published and what suppressed, might no longer be entrusted to a few illiterate and illiteral individuals, who refused their sanction to any works which contain views on sentiments at all above the level of the vulgar superstition."

Laud's policy of enforcing an external uniformity by pains and penalties had broken down, and one of its notorious disdainers was Milton, whose early pamphlets were unlicensed. The number of books submitted to the licensers in 1641 was 240; in 1642 only 76. Next year came a change. There were 35 licensed books in the first half of 1643; and 333 in the second half.¹

1. Masson's "Milton," iii, 269.

The reason for the increase is to be found in "An Order of the Lords and Commons assembled in Parliament for the regulating of printing, and for suppressing the great late abuses and frequent disorders in printing many false, scandalous, seditious, libellous, and unlicensed pamphlets to the great defamation of religion and government. Also authorising the Masters and Wardens of the Company of Stationers to make diligent search, seize and carry away all such books as they shall find printed, or reprinted, by any man having no lawful interest in them, being entered into the Hall Book to any other man as his proper copies."

This decree was ordered on June 14th, 1643, to be printed and published, and was followed up by the appointment of licensers. Twelve divines were nominated, any one of whom might give his "Imprimatur" to a book dealing with religion. To a judge and three men of known scholarship were entrusted polite literature and history; three lawyers for legal publications; the three Kings-at-Arms for heraldry; mathematics, almanacs, and prognostications were entrusted to the examination of the Gresham Lecturer, or John Booker, an astrologer and an almanac maker himself, whilst to the Clerk of the Stationers' Company was entrusted the task of dealing with small pamphlets and other things regarded as of no importance.

A petition from the Stationers' Company complaining of unlicensed printing and naming Milton's *Divorce tract* was referred by the House of Commons to the "Committee of Printing," to which four additional members were tacked on. The secondary title of the "Areopagitica" is "A Speech of Mr. John Milton, for the Liberty of Unlicensed Printing, to the Parliament of England." Is it possible that it may be an expansion of some address to that Committee? The Assembly of Divines had done their best to secure the punishment of Milton, but the stars in their courses had fought against these persecuting spirits. He was not only unharmed by their bitterness,

but had now come before the public in a tract of forty pages that for brilliance, cogency, and eloquence was without parallel in the English language—and has remained so to this day. Milton's "Areopagitica" is prose, but it is the prose of a poet, gorgeous in imagery, and full of noble music. It is the work of a scholar who knows the lessons of history. And above all, it is full of generous confidence in the eternal victory of Truth over Falsehood and of Right over Wrong.

Professor Henry Morley has rightly called attention to the skill with which Milton's speech is constructed. The exordium is one that would ensure the attention of all and the favourable attention of many. Then follows the statement of the case against the order for the regulation of printing, a custom which he treats as having died with the prelates. The censorship of books, he declares, had for its inventors those whom Parliament would be loth to own; it can avail nothing to the suppression of scandalous, seditious, and libellous books; and lastly, that it will be to the "discouragement of all learning and the stop of truth." This is the thesis which Milton defends with opulence of learning and magnificence of diction. Are there any limitations to this liberty of the press? Milton says: "I deny not but that it is of the greatest concernment in the Church and Commonwealth to have a vigilant eye how books demean themselves as well as men; and thereafter to confine, imprison, and do sharpest justice on them as malefactors," but he quickly minimises this concession by emphasizing the danger of destroying a good book. There is another passage in which he expressly excludes the Romanist and the Freethinker: "I mean not tolerated Popery and open superstition, which, as it extirpates all religious and civil supremacies, so itself should be extirpate—provided, first, that all charitable and compassionate means be used to win and regain the weak and the misled." Here again he has not the logical completeness of Roger Williams, who makes no exceptions

in his claim for mutual and universal toleration of differing opinions in his "Bloody Tenent of Persecution for Cause of Conscience," issued in this same year, 1644. Milton gives a brief historical survey and speaks of the discontent of the Italians under the Inquisition, and mentions his visit to "the famous Galileo grown old, a prisoner of the Inquisition, for thinking in astronomy otherwise than the Franciscan and Dominican licensers thought." After further dwelling on the disadvantages of the order the book ends with a peroration of sustained power that remains one of the greatest glories of our English literature.

"And though all the winds of doctrine were let loose to play upon the earth, so Truth be in the field, we do injuriously by licensing and prohibiting to misdoubt her strength. Let her and Falsehood grapple; who ever knew Truth to be put to the worse in a free and open encounter. Her confuting is the best and surest suppressing." In these two sentences Milton has compressed the whole of his doctrine—a generous and steadfast belief in the power of Truth.

There was further effort on the part of the Company of Stationers to bring Milton into trouble with Parliament. On December 9th, 1644, there was a complaint to the House of Lords of "a scandalous printed libel against the Peerage," and the Master and Wardens of the Stationers' Company were sent for and ordered to find out the author. On December 28th the Master and Wardens declared: "They have used their best endeavours to find out the printer and author of the scandalous libel, but they cannot yet make any discovery thereof, the letter being so common a letter; and further complained of the frequent printing of scandalous books by divers as Hezekiah Woodward and Jo. Milton."¹ This, as Masson points out, was a clever device of the Stationers' Company to get out of their own difficulty by turning aside the attention of the Lords.

1. Masson's "Milton," iii, 293.

The Peers directed that two justices should examine Woodward and Milton. That Woodward was placed under arrest is certain, but after examination he was released on his own bond. That Milton was either arrested or examined there is no evidence. His name does not occur again in this connection in the journal of the House of Lords.

What was the effect of Milton's plea for unlicensed printing? Technically it might be said to have failed for the order was not repealed, but its practical result was a relaxation of strictness that excited the indignation of the Presbyterians. "I am afraid," said bitter Thomas Edwards, "that if the Devil himself should make a book, and give it the title 'A Plea for Liberty of Conscience, with certain Reasons against Persecution for Religion,' and bring it to Mr. Bachiler, he would license it, and not only with a bare *imprimatur*, but set before it the commendation of 'a useful treatise' of 'a sweet and excellent book.'" Yet John Bachiler was one of the examiners appointed under the order! Gilbert Mabbot found the business so irksome that he resigned the office in May, 1649. The most startling fact of all is that Milton was one of the licensers of newspapers throughout 1651 and a portion of 1652. But the censorship is easily explained, and indeed was in reality a case of editorial supervision. The official journal of the Republic was the "*Mercurius Politicus*," written by Marmaduke Needham, whose MS. or proofs were submitted to Milton as Secretary of the Council of State.¹ It is not at all unlikely that some of the leading articles may have been wholly or partially from the pen of Milton. The Commonwealth, whose servant Milton was, had never been induced to adopt his principle of a free press. The ordinance of 1643 had been followed by similar action in 1647, 1649, 1652, and 1658. In practice it had perhaps not meant more than the sup-

1. Masson's "Milton," iv, 327—335.

pression of some indecent books and of pamphlets of the "killing no murder" ¹ order.

Milton's plea for unlicensed printing had fallen upon the ears of a deaf generation. He stigmatises the enchainment of literature as a papal device; but all the States of Europe had claimed and exercised the power of suppressing all books that were distasteful to them. And the Protestant theologians, no less warmly than their Romanist opponents, had approved of the intervention of the State for the punishment of authors, and the confiscation of books containing what they regarded as blasphemies or heresies. The right of authority to prevent the publication of unwelcome views; the right of the majority to coerce the minority, and to reduce to silence the holders of obnoxious opinions was so generally admitted, that he who propounded the contrary doctrine was certain to be regarded as an innovator dangerous to the commonwealth.

Dr. Johnson states the problem of the freedom of the press as it appeared to bygone statesmen with conciseness and lucidity: "The danger of such unbounded liberty, and the danger of bounding it, have produced a problem in the science of Government which human understanding seems hitherto unable to solve. If nothing may be published but what civil authority shall have previously approved, power must always be the standard of truth; if every dreamer of innovations may propagate his projects, there can be no settlement; if every murmurer at government may diffuse discontent, there can be no peace; and, if every sceptick in theology may teach his follies, there can be no religion. The remedy against these evils is to punish the authors; for it is yet allowed that every society may punish though not prevent, the publication of opinions, which that society shall think pernicious; but this punishment, though it may crush the author, promotes the book; and it seems to be not more reasonable to leave the right of printing unrestrained, because writers

¹ Masson's "Milton," v, 352.

may be afterwards censured, than it would be to sleep with doors unbolted, because by our laws we can hang a thief." Such is Johnson's statement of the case. In practice it is best that innovations should be publicly advocated and tested by free discussion; it is best that discontent should make itself known by open and recognised channels than by secret and underground courses. And certainly the religion that can be overthrown by argument has no right to live. When Dr. Alexander Leighton wrote a book against the prelates, and was condemned to stand in the pillory, to be twice whipped, to have his ears cut off, his nose slit, and his face branded, the punishment left his arguments, such as they were, entirely untouched. The hanging of Thomas Aikenhead, at Edinburgh, in 1696, did not put an end to the Trinitarian controversy. The imprisonment of Galileo did not prove that the earth stands still. It continues to move.

We are slowly coming to recognise that blows are not convincing, that the pillory is not a process of logic, and that even a sentence of death may not satisfy a man that he is in error. There is no better method of reaching a correct solution of problems, social or scientific, than free and candid discussion. No laws can fetter freedom of thought whatever penalties they may attach to its expression by voice or pen. But how shall I be redeemed from my errors if I may not even state them? How shall the State be freed from disease if suggested remedies are forbidden to be made known? Can science progress if investigation is forbidden and discoveries are proscribed?

The effort to restrict thought to a conventional rut has had a long trial and proved a deplorable failure, as a glance at the history of the censorship will show.

The invention of printing revolutionised the conditions of literature, and was followed by a more systematic fashion of guarding the members of the Roman Communion from books regarded as dangerous to faith or

morals. There had been denunciations of particular books during the middle ages, but the first Roman catalogue of prohibited books was issued in 1557 by Pius IV. There had been previous lists issued by the University of Louvain and by other authorities, national or local. The theory of the Curia was that its condemnations were valid throughout Christendom, and everywhere binding on the faithful. But this was by no means accepted by the nations. Spain acted through its own Inquisition, and the prohibitions of Rome and Seville were not always identical. Venice, partly for commercial reasons, did not accept the Roman Index, nor did France, Germany, or Belgium. The earliest of the modern lists of forbidden books seems to be that issued in England in 1526, when Henry VIII. was still an enthusiastic son of the Roman Church. Between the beginning of the sixteenth and the close of the nineteenth century Putnam enumerates fifty-three distinct lists issued by popes, monarchs, universities, and inquisitions. The "Indexes" are well known to the students of literature, and are remarkable both for what they include and for what they omit. Sometimes tricks were played on the licensers. Thus, an admirer of Aretino, who wished to reprint his "Filosofo," issued it in 1650 under the title of "Il Sofista," and with the blameless name of Tansillo as the author!

When Swedenborg wanted to print his "Vera Christiana Religio" in Paris, the MS. was submitted to Chevreuil, the licenser, who consented to give a "tacit permission" on condition that the title page should give London or Amsterdam as the place of publication. Swedenborg, more scrupulous than the censor, refused to adopt this trick, and the book was printed at Amsterdam.

Joseph Spence was told that the author of the "Circulus Pisanus" was in favour of Galileo's teaching and wrote "that the world would certainly come into it hereafter;

and all unanimously cry out V.G." The Inquisitor, being stupid, took him to mean "Verbi gratia," but what he intended was Vicisti Galilaeae." (Spence's "Anecdotes," p. 123.)

One result, which can scarcely have been foreseen, is that the Roman Index served as a guide to books which were obnoxious to the Curia, and therefore presumably of value to Protestant opponents. Dr. Thomas James secured as many as he could for the Bodleian Library and published an Index of them in 1627. A condemnation is an advertisement as well as a deterrent.

The policy of the Congregation of the Index did not differ from that of Protestant States. The burning of Servetus will always remain a red blot on the character of Calvin. In 1554, when a reply to one of Calvin's tracts appeared at Basel, he demanded that its publisher should be punished. At the instance of Beza a book by Morrelli de Villiers was by order of the Synod of Geneva burned by the common hangman in 1562. Luther was zealous for the censorship and suppression of books against his doctrines.

Nor can it be claimed that in our own country the doctrine of the freedom of the press received practical acknowledgment at any early date. In 1526 the bishops were busy searching out and burning the writings of Luther, Tyndal, Huss, and Zwingli. In 1526 Henry VIII. issued a list of eighteen books to be prohibited, and increased the number in 1529 to eighty-five. In 1530 he forbade the reading of the Bible in English, but revoked the order after his excommunication by the Pope. All the Tudors exercised the regal power for the suppression of books. The Stationers' Company formed in 1557 was an instrument in their hands, and had the exclusive right of printing and publishing. In 1559 the formal censorship was established by Elizabeth, when it was ordered that no book should be issued unless licensed by the Queen, six members of the Privy Council, the Chancellor of Oxford

and Cambridge, the Archbishops of Canterbury and York, the Bishop of London, and the Bishop and Archdeacon of the place of publication. In 1586 the Star Chamber allowed one press at Oxford and one at Cambridge, but restricted the licensing power to the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Bishop of London. James I., who was no friend of liberty, had one of his books, a defence of the subject's oath of allegiance, placed on the Roman Index in 1609.

Laud's Star Chamber decree of 1637 forms an elaborate code for the stringent supervision of printing and for the licensing of books. During the Commonwealth the censorship, whilst often relaxed, was never abolished, and at the Restoration was made more stringent by reverting to the Star Chamber decree. It was renewed for two years in 1693. In that year Edmund Bohun, the licenser, gave his imprimatur to a tract entitled "King William and Queen Mary, Conquerors," which was sent him by an enemy, Charles Blount. The House of Commons thereupon ordered it to be burnt by the hangman, and imprisoned the licenser and also voted his dismissal from office. Blount issued "Reasons humbly offered for the Liberty of Unlicensed Printing" and "A Just Vindication of Learning and of the Liberties of the Press," which chiefly consist of matter from Milton's "Areopagitica"—with a very scanty acknowledgment of the real author. When the time came for renewal in 1695 the act was dropped. What Milton's eloquence failed to do was accomplished by the trick of Charles Blount and the stupidity of Edmund Bohun. Thenceforward the English author stood in the position for which Milton had argued. The English writer might publish his thoughts without let or hindrance, but was subject to the law of the land if his books were deemed dangerous to the State or morals. The law was not always wisely administered. The long series of prosecutions during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries are melancholy exhibitions of political and theological

bigotry. It is even yet uncertain as to the limits within which discussion is permissible.

Technically every bookseller who sells a copy of Shelley's poem is liable to prosecution and imprisonment, but prosecutions are attended with so much difficulty that there is with us a larger measure of practical freedom than in any other part of Europe. In the United States and in the British self-governing Colonies there are even fewer restrictions. It is not arrogance to claim for the English-speaking races the largest freedom the world has known for the untrammelled utterance of the thoughts and speculations of the human mind.

The lesson of history is that an effective political or ecclesiastical censorship is impracticable. The mere mass of modern literature makes due examination impossible. Even if the examiners were infallible their labour would still be vain unless every reader could be persuaded to examine the "Index Librorum Prohibitorum" before he opened a book.

It is often the poets who see the farthest and clearest. Milton's vision was keener than that of the statesmen of his day, and than many of those of our own day. "Give me," he says, "the liberty to know, to utter, and to argue freely according to conscience, above all other liberties." There can be no real liberty without the liberty to think and to make known that which has been thought. Where this right is exercised all other liberties will follow.

He had faith in the power of Truth: "Let her and Falsehood grapple; who ever knew Truth put to the worse in a free and open encounter."

This is in the same heroic strain in which the soldier of Darius held forth:—

"As for truth it endureth and is always strong; it liveth and conquereth for evermore. With her there is no acceptance of persons or rewards; but she doeth the things

that are just, and refraineth from all unjust and wicked things; and all men do like well of her works. Neither in her judgment is any unrighteousness, and she is the strength, kingdom, power, and majesty of all ages. Blessed be the God of truth." And with that, says the ancient scribe, he held his peace. And all the people then shouted, and said, "Great is Truth, and mighty above all things."





MINERS OF COAL.

By GEORGE ELCE.

INTRODUCING my friend the collier let me parody
Lewis Carroll and say,

This Collier man digs hard upon
The coal he has to hew.
He works with almost nothing on,
A shocking thing to do,
But when he's dressed respectably
And lets his whiskers grow,
How very like indeed is he
To many a one we know.

The fundamental character of his work must render the miner an important item in an industrial community, yet in spite of that fact some people, acting under expert advice, retort and make light of, the result of his exacting labours. To put the thing as Gray does in his elegy,

Let not ambition mock their useful toil
Their homely joys and destiny obscure
Nor grandeur hear with a disdainful smile
The short and simple annals of the poor.

In the middle of last century the men and boys employed in and about Coalmines, not to speak of the women and girls who were employed up to 1848, were on the average unquestionably of a lower grade than were artisans generally.

The dirt, the risk, and the poor pay all combined to keep back decent sensible folks, who could possibly manage to exist otherwise, from engaging therein themselves or sending their sons and daughters into the pit. Dickens, D. Christie Murray and Mrs. Hodgson Burnett have all had a word or two to say about miners; and of course many writers of lesser eminence have exploited that field.

In the years 1865 to 1869 it was the writer's lot to pass along a road to and from school, where some hundreds of these dark folks travelled to and from the colliery at which they were employed. It appeared to be the habit of these men to foster a spirit of emulation amongst their junior members, which led to daily fights. It was the usual thing in the afternoon to see one or more groups of them in a field; many a sanguinary conflict I have so witnessed, and it often seemed as if the upshot of one provided material for another. The combatants were shirtless, stripped to the waist I mean, and the battle was with fists, clogs, nails, and often teeth.

Pay-day came once a fortnight, the *butty* system, under which a few men took a contract and had many men and lads working for them, was the usual rule; there was no law to prevent payment of wages in public houses, and the majority were paid there, although in some cases that would be done at the house of a *butty*, but, where this was so, the good wife of the *butty* would brew a good supply of beer so that when each fellow came for his wages he could be treated to a glass. It was a much debated point as to when a young fellow should really begin to be entitled to a drink, whether at a private or a public house, but if a lad was a promising, capable worker, he became entitled to a drink sooner, and to an extra one occasionally. Unfortunately, this conduced to render the best worker a deeper drinker, especially when combined with an extra shilling for himself for good service. A somewhat important occasion in those times was reckoning Monday, viz., the one next after pay Saturday, which was

by many thirsty souls devoted to a comprehensive co-operative booze; sometimes at various pubs, but often at a "butty brew," a big drink under the auspices of the dame of one of the partners, who brewed liquor for the occasion. Many incidents connected with the liking for intoxicants ever remain fresh in the mind of the writer. A very good leading pit-man was put to dismantle an old furnace shaft, having three labourers to assist him; about nine a.m. the manager walking along to the colliery saw one of the labourers going on with a stone beer bottle towards the pit. Having his attention aroused he naturally watched the man and saw him join the party in question and almost at once another started out with an empty bottle, also upon his return the first-seen bottle started another journey; it was perhaps three hundred yards to the nearest public-house. Waiting until the man with the third bottle arrived, and following him to our thirsty friend, the manager said, "What are these bottles about, Jim?" "Oh," said Jim, "it's only a drop o' 'lowance." "Why, man," said the boss, "I've seen three come and that makes six quarts, it appears to me as if it would take a small brewery to keep you four going." "Perhaps not such a small brewery as you imagine, sir," was the reply that lost Jim his place.

In March 1870, in a pit where the writer was at work, one district of the pit was devastated by a very violent explosion of gas, and nearly all the men there were killed. A rescue party of miners from other parts of the mine was promptly formed, and when they had started some one suggested that a bottle of brandy would have been useful to them in case of trouble with afterdamp. A pint of brandy was procured and a valiant volunteer followed them along the level with directions to apply its benefit to any failing, fainting comrade he might haply find. It appears that when he was about seven hundred yards from the pit bottom, perhaps because he did not come up with the party of pioneers or maybe because he felt lonely, he

began to apply the remedy to himself, and finding the idea a good one carried it so far that the next rescue party discovered him and rescued the first victim as also the empty brandy bottle. On his arrival at the surface, even in the midst of all the horror and the stress, it was a bit comical to hear the cheers of hundreds in the waiting crowd when the word went round that one gallant rescuer was saved in the nick of time.

One Easter Monday, nearly twenty years ago, my wife and self, with a few friends, were about to start for a stroll when word came from one of our pits that a collier was under a fall of roof. Arriving at the pit about the time the poor fellow was brought to the surface I found him in a state of collapse, and was told that he had been quite unconscious for the half-hour that had elapsed since the accident. I instructed one of our fellows to pour some brandy into his mouth; the poor sufferer opened first one eye and then the other, and said, "By G. that's good, too." "Is there any more?" When the bottle was empty we put him into a cab to proceed to hospital, six miles away. For fear he should faint on the way we put a young fellow with him in the cab, giving him the bottle and the coin, by chance a half-crown, which was handiest, instructing him if it appeared necessary to procure a little more spirit as he passed through a village about half way. Not hearing anything about the change out of the coin for a period of several days, I asked the chaperon what he had done with it. "Why," he said, "there wern't any change, he made me stop at the 'Roebuck' and get half-a-crown's worth, and he supped it before we landed, and fainted after all, before we carried him into the infirmary."

It was my business for several years to go, on Sundays and holidays, with the horsekeeper to assist him in feeding the horses in a pit about 700 yards deep. The winding engine was one of "Fairbairn's" Vertical Condensing engines, a very powerful rapid machine. The air pump and condensor were below the level of the pit bank, but

the winder stood where he could look along horizontally and see the cages land and depart. Perhaps one ought to say that some years previously two men went down that pit with the horsekeeper, and during their stay underground the winder got drunk and then wound them right over the pulleys to sudden violent death. Well, one Summer Sunday morning the writer reached the pit surface to go down. My chum, the horsekeeper, who liked a "deep, deep draught," on Saturday night, had not turned up. Going to the door of the winding room, knowing what winder would be on duty, I shouted "Tom! Tom!" A voice from below called "All right." Turning my back to the engine I went to the shaft, and the cage coming up, got in. Then, and only then, did I look at the winder, and to my dismay he was so drunk that he could hardly stand. In fact my idea is, that he was only able to do so by clinging to the valve wheel and the tappet lever of his engine, and I had seven hundred yards of an exciting ride. A Welsh mining friend of mine tells about a party of four descending a shaft in a hoppet or kibble, and when some fifteen to twenty feet from the bottom they somehow or other began to swing, one of their number being thrown out and falling down the shaft. Steadying themselves the rest descended in fear and trembling to find their comrade lying on the floor. Moving him into a full length, comfortable position, one noticed that he was breathing and that he moved his eyelids. Pouring a little warm tea between his teeth a comrade said: "Hey Bill!" "Hello!" he replied, "what's to do?" "Oh, don't you know Bill, you fell out of the hoppet?" "How far did I fall?" "Happen fifteen or twenty feet." "And how the devil far should I fall to get a drink of brandy?" said Bill. Ab-o'th'-Yate, in his journal, about 1873, told of two pitmen coming into Manchester, for a spree, on one of their off days. A remark made by one of the twain was prophetic; he said: "Tha knows if these wages keep up we'st have to

send childer to skoo or summat of that sort," and late at night, when they are both overcome by their potations, they fall into a doze at the foot of a street lamp post. Imagining that they are at the foot of a pit shaft waiting for the cage, one of them looking upward to the light decides to climb it and does so until his head strikes the crossbar, when he quickly descended again." As a matter of fact, a collier whom I knew very well went home one Saturday night, and for some reason not defined sat down on the floor under one of those old-fashioned clocks with weights hanging at the ends of a long chain to run them. Waking up and imagining himself waiting at the foot of a pit shaft, he decided to pull the signal, a thing only permitted to properly appointed men; however, grasping the clock weight, our friend took the risk, considerably to the detriment of himself and the clock, as it bodily responded to his effort.

To return to our miner of forty years ago, when the writer first went into the pit amongst perhaps forty to sixty lads, there was hardly one who could write; it was a frequent performance, if we had to wait for empty tubs or when waiting to come up at the end of our shift, for a group to say, "Come on Elce, write us our names on a tub or on a landing plate, etc.," and not at all an unusual comment arising out of it being, "He's some — sense comin' i' pit, hasn't he?" The rule about a lad entering the mine was, he must be ten years of age and able to write his name, but it was not made necessary by strict legal enforcement and so, perhaps from gentlemanly motives of politeness the authorities took the word of an applicant on both points.

The two most evident things about the average ignorant miner of those days were his fatalism and his fondness for larking or practical joking. Explosions were pretty frequent. In the term of five years preceding and following my entering the mine, even with the few miners then employed, 1,400 lost their lives by those explosions killing

20 or more each, though they were more often individuals burned in small ones, and the usual comment would be, "Has ta yerd about such a pit blowing up yesterday." "Aye, well! What has to be, has to be; if a chap's born to be brunt, he'll never be drownt." If a man was killed by a runaway tub or a fall of roof, the idea was the same, "Oh well it was his fate, and nowt could alter it tha knows." Of course this tended in some cases to very daringly reckless proceedings; and also many mining people were superstitious, as sailors are. A collier or his wife would dream of an explosion, or just at the last minute he or one of his family would have a presentiment of danger and disaster, and remain away, and in some cases a man would miss an accident in that way. Often after a fatality quite a majority of the folks would not venture alone anywhere near the place of its occurrence.

In reference to practical joking, perhaps its culmination was reached when a group could persuade some credulous fellow to be tied to a rope and, standing with his back to a lodge or canal, attempt to pull a cat across, in which case the strong man usually got very wet. As to the moral tone of the early colliers there were many samples of a very poor order, and the conversation about women and matters concerning the relations of the sexes was not reminiscent of the flavour of chivalry. Happily the tone is much improved and although one is bound to say that, like David Harum's friend the deacon, a collier does now and then use an emphatic adverb or adjective, there is not the same filthy obscenity as once obtained. It is almost needless to ask how it could be otherwise then, seeing that the miners were to a great extent the offscouring of the slums, quite acquainted with the stern realities of the poverty below the line of Mr. Charles Booth or the one Thackeray says Rebecca sometimes went beneath in Vanity Fair. However, in the seventies, by the putting into operation of the Education Act, the Coal Mines Regulation Act, and also largely arising from the sudden spurt in the rate of wages paid

for mining work, better things began to appear. Some people heard of the things Ab-o'th'-Yate and others ridiculed in colliers, namely drinking champagne, trying to ape the wealthy classes in their dissipations and pleasures, and, in view of the better reward to sweeten their dusty labours, a superior class began to send their junior members into the pits. When the shibboleth was a pass in the fourth or fifth standard at a day school, miners generally, mounted a step. One day a little redhead came to one of our under-managers bearing a school paper shewing him to have passed only the third (III.) standard. "This third won't do my lad," the official said. "Should it have been a four?" the youth enquired. "Yes." "And by — I wish I'd known," he replied.

There was quite a wide valley of a slump in wages between 1874 and 1878, but the mines inspector, the compulsory education and the certificated manager at each pit, did not die down, and the miner has gradually, but not always quietly, passed all his artisan brethren in obtaining material recognition of his humble but particularly essential services to the community. He has grown so fond of his work that the law has had to limit him to eight hours a day from July first, 1909. Just as in the old times, many bright examples of miners were, as Goldsmith says, "As some tall cliff that lifts its awful form, Swells from the vale and midway leaves the storm." So now there are too many lamentable instances which remind one of what Crabbe said on that same subject, "Ah no a Shepherd of a different stock, And far unlike him feeds this little flock." But on the whole the type has very much improved. Indeed a coal miner to-day is quite usually a very decent fellow in every relationship of life. We are told that, in rebuilding their Holy City, the Jews worked with a sword right handy ready for an ever threatening danger; this must have made them ready men, or as Ian MacLaren says of his "Young Barbarians," "Men of their hands." This is certainly the lot of the

collier, and nature responds to the call by developing in those who survive the requisite coolness, courage, craft and daring to meet the exigencies of their calling. If Newton had been a miner he would, with his intuition, have discovered the force of gravity long before apples were ripe enough to fall.

Every coal miner knows that he literally carries his life in his hands and may easily lose it by the way, either by his own or another's mistake. As a class they are ever of a mind to help to save life at a crisis even at a risk over and above what is usual to them. It is curious what a strong sidelight can be thrown on these things by some casual happening. In 1880 it was my lot to take over the supervision of a pit, that had been at work for about forty years, from an old man who, whilst a good pitman, in many ways was somewhat eccentric, and "his works did follow him." As one result of this, his method of ventilation left a large area of old workings so stranded that when there was a serious fall in barometric pressure enormous volumes of CH_4 poured out into the return airways of the mine and, as the ventilation was generated by means of an underground furnace, this made one quake at times, especially as the pit had previously earned a deplorable reputation as a death-trap, like the Old Hell Pit in "Hard Times." Well, we erected a larger furnace and prepared to regularly keep these derelict areas clear of the enemy, but, as a preliminary, we had of course to dislodge the residual danger, and so we made arrangements to begin that operation one Saturday afternoon, with a chosen band of workers when the persons ordinarily employed had left the mine. A young fellow who was desirous of becoming a mining engineer, in theory at any rate, having heard of what was afoot, approached the writer and requested to be allowed to come and see it done, a favour one was quite pleased to grant. He turned up at the appointed time and we went into the mine just about 1 p.m. I showed him on the plan and in the pit where the

gas was, where it would have to pass, where the furnace was, and how we proposed to effect a portion of the clearance that week-end and the rest upon a succeeding one. The Mueseler Safety Lamp, a great advance on the Davy, had just been invented, and we each had one in case of any unforeseen development, as "The best laid schemes o' mice and men gang aft agley." The seam was very steep and we had a fair climb to the place best fitted to observe, direct and control the business. Having arrived there and stationed the men who had doors to shut or open, etc., to order, I gave the requisite instruction and took my *pro tem* pupil to where we could watch the effect. For a bit there was not much sign of the gas moving, then a slight cap appeared, and after perhaps half-an-hour there was enough coming to cause one to have the push behind it modified for fear of fouling the whole return air and maybe having an explosion in the upcast shaft above the furnace, although our arrangements were such as to render that possibility a remote one. Our visitor was deeply interested when he had the cap on the flame pointed out to him and more so when there was a long blue flame above the lamplight. "So that's coal gas is it," he said, and then, when we retreated out of it and he heard my order to steady the flow of it a little, he took his watch out and said, "You won't complete this job this week-end, will you?" "Oh no, we shall do what we can, and dare, up to Sunday night and then continue it next Saturday." "Can you," he enquired, "spare one of your men to go to the pit bottom with me. I have remembered an appointment with a man in Manchester and I believe it is possible to catch the 4-30 train." I sent a fireman with him, and, on shaking hands, he asked permission to come again on the next Saturday. When his guide arrived back he said, "I thought yon man couldn't travel." "Why, could he?" I asked. "By — I could hardly keep up with him and every minute or two he kept saying, 'How long will it be before that gas reaches the upcast do

you think.' " We completed the operation later, but were not favoured by a visitor.

A gentleman native of our village, but for many years a resident in London, came over on a visit and expressed a desire to explore one of our pits. I took him down in the early afternoon and, on our way along the main road, we came across the under-manager whose first name was Jack, and who turned and journeyed with us into a working place. We had just reached the coal face when a young chap came rushing pell-mell into it and addressing Jack said, panting and nearly breathless, " Jack, everybody has to get out of the pit as soon as ever they can." Jack said, " What are ta talking so silly about and what's to do." " I don't know only what I've told you." " Well," said Jack, " just shut thy mouth and let somebody with more sense do the telling," and then we were surprised to find our visitor almost in a state of collapse and, like " Rachel," refusing to be comforted. It was in vain to reassure him because, as he moaned, reminding one of the converse of a little passage in Cranford, " He knew that we had not and could not have any more knowledge of what was amiss than he himself had." We sent the workmen out as usual without any alarm or upset, despatching a fellow of sense and fleetness to go and bring us proper information of what might be amiss. It was a most casual failure, a nut stripped on the slide valve of the hauling engine, at a time so near the end of the shift, that they could not square it up and renew work in that period, and the message, when it started for us, was just to that effect, but we had almost to carry our amateur miner out, and he spent the remainder of the day in abstinence and rest; he was certain when he heard the message that he had come to the end of his mortal race.

There is a story of a clergyman visiting the workings of a Durham mine and making close enquiries of his guide about the qualities of the safety lamp he carried. The overman advised him to direct his enquiries to the next

collier they came to; upon this being done, the hewer replied, "Ye see that bit gaaz." "Yes." "Well! there's only that atween ye and Hell when yer down here."

On the other hand, miners like Ben Battle, used "To war's alarms" in the main, "Face the coming peril, like their forefathers of old," in a manly way that has been amply demonstrated in many of those victories which belong "To arts of peace, and are no less renowned than war." In November, 1883, at Altham Colliery, an outburst of gas occurred and was ignited at a Davy lamp, killing my predecessor and 69 others with him. It was nearly certain that we should sooner or later have sudden exudations of gas as the work developed, and on December 8th, 1901, we had, quite suddenly, some millions of cubic feet liberated from the floor, like an earthquake or a thunder clap. We had a good lamp and a decent system of ventilation and, though about ten fellows in the actual place were scared almost out of their wits, and rushed out minus clothes, nothing worse followed, and what I wish to emphasize is the fact that every one of our men at that pit came to his work the next day. On December 11th, 1903, we had another sudden outburst, where forty men were at work, not nearly the same volume of gas being given off, but still making the atmosphere explosive, and extinguishing the lamps. On this occasion also we had all our men at work on the following turn. Of course, "Men must work and women must weep, Though storms be sudden and waters deep," but it does take grit to "play the man."

At the risk of being tiresome let one give a little evidence that, although occasionally rough and perhaps a trifle vulgar, sometimes a collier has wit. An old pit manager friend of mine, whose method of dealing with his men was at times rather pompous, had a deputation of his hewers wait upon him about some hard coal they desired extra pay for. One of the hewers said, "Of course we know its a rather hard climb to where we work for a gentleman of

your age—the manager was far past his youth,—but we do think that if you'd come and have a look at our coal we should have a bit extra for them." "Now look here," said my friend, "you men just go and work a shift and then come away and haven't any responsibility or care on your minds at all and yet think all the trouble falls on you. Now my mind is always at work about the pit, even when I ought to be at rest I am thinking of it." "Yes," one of the men said, "and it ud be a d——d sight easier if we could cut yon coal that road too."

One Whit-week many years ago, actually in 1894, at one of our pits we decided to play all the week to carry out a rather extensive alteration of screening machinery. It had been quite nice fine weather for many weeks but just when we had finished winding coal and were about to begin our outdoor operations a very heavy shower came on and our men ran to shelter. A group of them were under a little shed, where we could hear their talk and not be seen, and one of their number said to the others, "Well, chaps, these parsons have been praying for rain for many a week and by — they've o'erdone it." Some ten years ago we put an endless rope to haul coals on a rather steep incline underground. On the two first days we did very badly, the brow was about 600 yards long, and about noon on the second day some full wagons, made chiefly of wood, ran back from near the top end and dashing into those below reduced many of them to firewood and scrap. However, in the melee we found out what we must alter, but decided that it would take us until next morning to carry out the rectification, so we sent for the colliers to come out. The under-manager and myself were sitting in a manhole, and the miners going past in little groups made comments on the passing events as people do. One fellow coming along said, to a chum before reaching us, "Thou knows I think this rope will be a — good job, if any of us live to see it at work." Their

prowess at the more strenuous athletics such as wrestling is no doubt well known to everyone.

We know of one good soul who entertained

The long remembered beggar as his guest
Whose beard descending swept his aged breast.

And by that standard the collier is indeed generous, for if anyone desires to see a crowd reminiscent of the one that hindered the lame man at Bethesda from having any chance to be dipped in the miraculous well, let him go to where a body of colliers are being paid their wages and he will be amply satisfied that meanness is not their paramount failing. In fact no good cause hardly ever fails to receive their active support and sympathy. When Welsby so heroically lost his life at Hamstead Colliery a friend of his at Normanton put the case before me and I asked our men to lend a hand on behalf of his widow and family, and they responded with a very handsome subscription, and since then they as cheerfully gave to those stranded by the Maypole disaster.





MY FIRST CARNIVAL.

By J. REDFEARN WILLIAMSON.

SOME years ago I rose from a long and miserable attack of influenza with feelings of unspeakable languor and weakness to gaze through my bedroom window on the outer world. It was a January morning: cold, clammy, cheerless. The prospect, to a lack-lustre eye, was dismal and forbidding. In the distance a cluster of grimy factory chimneys lifted themselves like lofty pine trees above the serried rows of houses. From each towering shaft the curling smoke, spreading fanwise in the still air, formed a mirky canopy so dense that only the nearest objects were dimly visible in the premature twilight.

In this condition of outer gloom and inward depression of spirits, someone mentioned the Riviera. The idea of travelling thereto, once planted, grew like Jonah's gourd, and, though I felt like a limp rag, not many hours elapsed before I was journeying south with a self-denying companion. In London it was cold: in Paris it was colder: at Avignon a bitter mistral was blowing, icicles were hanging from the railway carriage roofs, and the land of dance and Provençal song and sunburnt mirth was like a beautiful woman in the chilling grasp of death. Beyond Hyères the conditions improved. As we sped along the shores of the Mediterranean the first gleam of dawn appeared on the horizon like a harbinger of hope, and, by a happy coincidence, the beginning of a month of brilliant weather, the Carnival and I met together in Nice at nearly the same time.

Wearied with the journey, I had a long rest in the hotel, and then went out to see the town. I could scarcely believe my own eyes. The tales of the genii were true; the slave of the lamp still lived; the magic carpet was a reality; the wand of Prospero was unbroken. I had been transported to an earthly paradise. Yesterday I shivered beneath a sky that I could touch with a stick; now, like the Sultan of old, I walked in a garden of spice under a dome higher than thought. In the golden limpidity of hot sunshine the squares and public gardens were gay with roses in full bloom, with geraniums, heliotrope, and camelias, and sweet with the scent of clove, carnations and mignonette. On white walls the clematis clung in large purple patches; against the dark green of laurel or myrtle, peach and almond blossoms burned like spots of flame; and lemons and tangerenes were ripe on the boughs. In the open gardens near the sea, date and fan palms, gum, camphor, bamboo and red-pepper trees spoke of the semi-tropical climate.

A Phenician settlement, a Roman colony, an Italian town, Nice was re-discovered and made popular by a Briton, Tobias Smollet, who made a tour of France and Italy, and anathematised everything and everybody—couriers, innkeepers, shopkeepers, climate, customs and morals in one comprehensive curse—all, except this town now under French rule. In remembrance of his services, the grateful inhabitants named a square and street after him, only they wrongly spelled his name, which thing, could he see it, would be another grievance to the irascible Scotsman.

The old town is picturesque and narrow-streeted; the modern extension is a miniature Paris, unrivalled in situation for open air ceremonies, of which the authorities take full advantage when the Carnival draws near.

As the name denotes, the Carnival is a farewell to rich meats; an adieu to luxury; the prodigal's last carousal preceding the inevitable eating of husks and penitential

reflections. In its palmiest days it probably closely resembled the ancient Saturnalia, but many of the grosser features have been toned down to meet the change in ethical ideas. In all Italian cities the details varied according to local taste and tradition. In Venice, for instance, if all accounts are correct, the revels had a Dionysian character and colour not to be found elsewhere. When the fortunes of the Republic were at the lowest ebb, the Carnival was prolonged for months and maintained at the highest point of reckless extravagance. Charles Godfrey Leland, in his memoirs, says the one he witnessed in Rome in 1846 was the last genuine Carnival which Italy ever beheld. But this can hardly be so, as a distinguishing custom, the race of riderless wild horses in the Corso was not suppressed till a few years later. In all places it is clearly understood that those who indulge in the grown-up child's play should keep their temper: a salutary rule that only strangers are apt to forget; and a lapse from good manners that is seldom allowed to go unpunished.

The festivities in Nice extend over a fortnight, and include three principal events: The Fête des Mascarades in the Avenue de la Gare; The Battle of Flowers on the Promenade des Anglais; and the Battle of Confetti in the Cours Saloya. For days before the opening ceremony the town is in a ferment of excitement and expectancy. Large sums of money are spent in decorating the streets, and in buying dominos, masks, and vizors by those who intend to join in the proceedings. When the preparations are complete, a short period intervenes, pending the dramatic arrival of King Carnival in person. This modern lord of Misrule is a gigantic figure representing a jovial-looking Bacchus, fittingly enthroned on an enormous wine cask, gorgeously arrayed in fine raiment, and appropriately crowned with a chaplet of vine leaves. Every year he is brought to the town in the dead of night with much mystery and secrecy—as if he were a conspirator, some-

times by land, sometimes by sea. He is then placed on a barbarically bedizened car, in the middle of the place Massèna, or principal Square, where he sits in triumphal state until the following Sunday. This monarch of mirth, when seated, beams down on a fascinated world from an elevation rather higher than a two-storied house.

When the long-looked for morning arrives throngs of animated holiday folk stream through the streets into the large central square like sparkling rivulets filling a mountain lake. These are swelled by people from the surrounding villages: re-inforced later by conscientious worshippers, coming from church and chapel, who yet cannot resist this exceptional temptation of a Continental Sunday. As the appointed hour approaches a cosmopolitan crowd of many thousands is assembled to see the inviting show: gay and good-tempered, in keeping with the occasion. Precisely at two o'clock a signal gun is fired from the Citadel, and immediately the *mêlée* begins. However inadequately, let me try to convey an idea of the scene as it presented itself on my first visit.

Imagine a broad, straight road, one-and-threequarters of a mile long, the side walks bordered with a double row of plane and eucalyptus trees, interspaced with festooned Venetian masts: put in this extended avenue a bewildering panorama of grotesque semblances: mimes and mummers, bears, lions, pigs, swans, champagne bottles, loaves of bread, Ulysses and the Cyclops in a boat twice the size of a tram-car, a cynical group symbolical of marriage, a man and woman with their hands tied back to back, and a Gargantuan pair of scissors between them, which neither can reach: life-like little girls perched on geese, these, and many more antic figures, moving in slow procession on cars and waggons fill the windows and balconies on both sides of the route with laughing groups of people throwing rolls of parti-coloured ribbons across the trees and vehicles, and flinging handfuls of tinted paper confetti from well-filled bags on the crowds below

till the pavement is thick with the tiny discs; picture the men, women, and children in the calvalcade as Pierrots and Pierrettes, as clowns, as jesters in cap and bells, as cowed monks, as ballet dancers, as colombines and pantaloons—all capering, leaping and pirouetting, and nearly every one whooping, whistling, or playing on a toy instrument; then, beyond the long line of mountebanking merry-makers, look through the over-arching colonnade of sycamores at the background of low hills dotted with twisted, knotted gray-green olive trees: these being dominated by the snow-capped peaks of the Maritime Alps; cover this impressive landscape with a firmament of unfathomable blue; fill the space between earth and heaven with air that tastes like iced champagne suffused with sunshine, and you may faintly realise the spectacle of a southern populace enjoying itself under ideal conditions.

Many effective combinations of movement and colour are possible when days are free from mists and showers, and the temperature reaches ninety-six degrees. But persons in delicate health should remember that this winter warmth is deceptive. As soon as the sun sinks behind the western promontory the temperature falls like a stone dropped down a well. Each playful puff of wind strikes like an arrow tipped with ice: and every shady corner is a trap where pneumonia lies in wait. With the advent of night the danger passes, and you can safely walk out of doors without taking any special precaution.

On the following Friday the Battle of Flowers on the Promenade des Anglais afforded fresh delight to pageant-loving idlers. The promenade was made by wealthy English visitors in 1822, a year of great distress in Nice, in order to provide work and wages for the poor of the town. A more magnificent playground for Folly to disport in would be difficult to find. It extends round the curving bay like a crescent moon in its first quarter, overlooking the shelving strand where, in still weather, the

Mediterranean breaks in almost soundless ripples on the shingly beach below.

The wide boulevard is already swept and garnished. The grand stands, placed at intervals along the route, are occupied by people who can afford to pay from three to twenty francs for a seat to watch the most elaborate and fashionable fête of the season. Behind these tiers of spectators the newly-painted villas and hotels are gay with flags of all nations. All ordinary traffic is stopped, but presently the carriages authorised to join in the proceedings appear from all sides, and quickly take their allotted places until a queue is formed far as the eye can reach. The gun fire from the battery again gives the signal, and the procession, at a walking pace, moves round its measured course.

As the carriages follow in file, you notice a few that are wonders of artistic decoration, and many that are simply gaudy and obtrusive. Each of them is covered—body, wheels, box and shafts, with the costliest native and exotic blooms the owners can buy. Horses and harness are garlanded to match. Baskets heaped with dainty sprays and bouquets are also carried, and the harmless missiles are thrown to friends and acquaintances standing outside the barriers: gently at first, then quicker and quicker as the tournament proceeds. The sport becomes fast and furious, and the flowers in their parabolic flight from hand to hand resemble graceful rockets crossing in mid air. But what of those who provide the expensive ammunition for this mimic warfare? They come from all lands: plutocrats, autocrats, statesmen, the vicious, the useless; beautiful women, painted harridans, vigorous youth, palsied eld. And yet this up-to-date procession seems strangely unreal. It must be a fantasy: an emblem of what real life is.

In the coronetted carriage now passing are three girl children sitting waist deep in half blown roses. Their fair young faces are flushed like the roses themselves;

their cheeks are dimpled with laughter; their eyes are dancing with delight. A luminous happiness irradiates the atmosphere around them: they are embodied joys from another world, and I have had a momentary glimpse of a fabled age.

The fairy chariot and the dream children fade from view in a cloud of almost visible fragrance: and I am gazing at a carriage of a different kind. Its occupants are two ladies of the demi-monde, and a man. The man is like a leering Silenus. He is grossly fat, and shows a wide expanse of white waistcoat. He has a carbuncly countenance, shaded by a glossy silk hat set slightly a-tilt on his close-cropped gray head. His lips are sensuous and cruel, and his podgy hands are hidden in lemon-coloured kid gloves. By some monstrous, inexplicable perversity, he has buried his landau under snowy masses of Easter lilies and lilies of the valley, emblems of chastity and spotless purity. Were he truly alive, he would be known as a South African Millionaire, or the head of an American Trust, but I cannot believe he is either. The portent that rivets my attention is a resuscitated Cæsar, Tiberius, or Domitian, or Caligula, whose glance wanders over the crowd to find victims for his lust, or martyrs for his cruelty.

Whatever his name, he also vanishes, borne onward like a link in an endless chain. The battle still continues, but it is plain that round arms are feeling fatigue, that slender wrists are aching. The pelting volleys are less frequent: many nosegays fall short and roll in the dust. Rare hot-house blooms are trampled under the horses' feet, or have their life's-blood crushed out beneath the revolving tyres. And here, too, my fancy sees—not bruised and broken blossoms, wantonly and wastefully flung away, but sensitive natures—the young, the ingenuous, the tender-hearted, that lie, battered and bleeding, beneath the Juggernaut car of modern civilisation.

As a display of lavish wealth the fête is an undoubted

success; yet the tanned fisher folk—red-capped, blue-bloused, shawled and gowned in bright colours—seem much more effective and picturesque. And one stately figure, an Arab rug-seller, in turban and flowing robes, makes every fashionably-dressed man in the procession appear commonplace and insignificant. Apparently oblivious of the gay and frivolous scene before him, he stands like a statue, and the expression on his face is that of one dreaming of tents, and camels, and desert sands.

The afternoon wears away. Prizes amounting to hundreds of pounds have been awarded, and winners and losers are leaving the ground. The crowd breaks up and invades the long drive at all points, and boys and girls scramble for the strewn flowers. The second scene is over.

The third processional frolic, perhaps nearest akin to the original pagan pastime, is on the last Sunday previous to Lent, in a narrow street of the old town. The people who take part in it are mainly of the working-class: and it is dangerous for any stranger to mingle in the throng without a domino and wire vizor to protect the face and eyes from the showers of confetti that are thrown from house tops, windows, balconies and doorways. This confetti, the size of pistol bullets, unlike the harmless paper kind previously used, is made of plaster of Paris. Bags full of this hard shot, like so many sacks of dried peas, are piled on convenient stalls, where the combatants can renew their stock when the original supply is exhausted, and the sellers never complain that trade is slack.

The revellers engaging in the fray use scoops made of zinc, tin, or white metal: and soon the sound of the artificial hail is heard rattling on shutters, walls, fans, hats, and sunshades. The noise of this sharp-shooting, combined with the uproar of laughter, shouts, screams, and music from the bands, is almost deafening, and the street is an indescribable babel. Woe betide any man or woman who presumes on his or her dignity as a protection. These masqueraders are no respecters of persons. Were

king or kaiser to venture within range without mask or helmet, a fusilade of stinging, acrid pellets, on eyes, mouth, and ears, would quickly prove to the unfortunate bystander that the Saturnian reign of equality, for the time being, was in active operation.

The fight is continued to the end, in heat and dust, with unabated energy. When it ceases the thoroughfare is like a lime-kiln. In a mad stampede the revellers disappear in the gloaming like scattering ghosts: and the spectators, slowly following, look like corn millers leaving work. Notwithstanding the roughness of the sport the masqueraders run no risk of being mobbed or hustled like English football players and referees. Nor is it without import that in a town where wine shops are plentiful and teetotalers scarce, during the whole period of license, the magistrates had no case before them of drunkenness or unruly behaviour.

While Carnival lasts, dull hours are few. The pulse of pleasure is at high tide. Reviews, regattas, and excursions to Monte Carlo fill the days; the nights are devoted to the theatre, operas, marionette performances, the gambling casino, a torchlight procession, and other more or less seductive amusements; while masked balls and dances, both public and private, are indulged in with feverish zest, till the last stroke of twelve on the midnight of Shrove Tuesday announces the close of another chapter in the book of Time.

To me it was all enjoyable. With remembrances of dissipations, my memory brings back early mornings when I lay listening to the far-off music of regimental bands, growing louder and stronger as the troops marched past, then sounding fainter and fainter in the distance. I recall afternoon rambles when I met squads of sappers with their tool-laden mules toiling up almost impossible paths, and saw cavalry pickets bivouacing on the upper Corniche road, while the bugle calls of skirmishers went echoing among the crags. I renew an interesting experi-

ence in the quaint town hall square, where throngs of beardless lads from neighbouring villages and communes, with tricolor ribbons on their hats and breasts, were assembled for the annual Conscription. And I remember, with nameless longing, noonday rests in vine-trellised arbours of wayside auberges, when the modest lunch of bread and fruit was a feast of Lucullus, and the flagon of Asti Spumanti tasted like the most delicious Hippocrène.

As I write these lines, in the gathering dusk of a March day, the snow is falling on the lawn. But what I really see, as in a magic crystal, is a picture far away. Clouds are gathering on the not distant crests of the Maritime Alps. Volumes of vapour are rolling through the valleys and round the mountain slopes. The vista is hidden in leaden sheets of rain. By-and-bye wide rifts appear in the dark screen. The huge scrolls of vapour dissolve in silvery swathes. The clouds, growing thinner and thinner, ascend higher and higher in the blue intensity, and finally disappear like flights of white-winged sea birds soaring out of sight. And on the foreground of narrow coast-line, and out to sea, the sun shines in unsullied splendour the livelong day, from a pure and serene sky.

That is the last picture of an enchanted month in one of the loveliest bays in Europe.





SWINBURNE'S "THE AGE OF SHAKESPEARE."

A Review.

By J. H. BROCKLEHURST.

ON the 24th September, 1908, appeared the long-looked for book from the pen of one who is perhaps our greatest living poet, to wit, Algernon Charles Swinburne. So far back as September 7, 1905, the editor of the "British Weekly" writing in that journal raised high the hopes of all Swinburne readers. The story "Love's Cross Currents" had recently been published, but Swinburne's *magnum opus* as a prose writer was still to come and would appear before long. Delays dogged the production of the work, however, and three years elapsed before it was completed and in the hands of the booksellers. Dr. Nichol's story of the progress of the book is most interesting and well serves to emphasise the fact that good criticism comes only by painstaking industry even when undertaken by a genius such as Swinburne.

It would appear that the idea of his writing an exhaustive treatise on the Elizabethan dramatists was first conceived in the early seventies, and instalments of the book appeared in the "Fortnightly Review" and the "Nineteenth Century," and, "in no instance," we are informed, "would Mr. Swinburne consent to print an essay upon a dramatist until he had read every play, and indeed every scrap of prose and poetry the man had written."

That Mr. Swinburne is a thoroughly conscientious critic none reading his essays and "studies" would doubt, and the foregoing statement receives a certain amount of confirmation from Mr. Swinburne himself, for he says in the essay on Thomas Heywood, after remarking upon that writer's "amazing fecundity,"¹ "though I certainly cannot pretend to anything like an exhaustive or even an adequate acquaintance with all or any of his folios, I can at least affirm that they contain enough delightfully readable matter to establish a more than creditable reputation."

For the purposes of the work in hand Mr. Swinburne ransacked the treasures of the Bodleian Library and then it was necessary to resort to the British Museum. When the book was all but finished an edition of Rowley's works was expected and for this Mr. Swinburne waited, refusing to comply with the urgent solicitations of his friends to finish his perusal of Rowley's writings at the British Museum, because of a distaste for reading there which had taken hold upon him. As only two of Rowley's plays were left for his consideration he was advised to publish the essay without reading them, when he replied, "I might find something in one of his plays which might modify my opinion of Rowley and the thing is impossible."

However, a friend at last prevailed upon him to overcome his antipathies, and "the result was," writes Dr. Nichol, "that they went, and he who had never been seen in the Museum for a quarter of a century was seen there again, bending over Rowley quartos and making extracts."

"The interesting feature connected with this story is that a writer allowed a mass of work to which he had given a considerable portion of his life to remain scattered and lost in the magazines for the sake of about ten pages. This shows two things: an amazing strength of the artistic conscience and an amazing faith that time would allow him to take nearly forty years over a book."

1. He has had "either an entire hand or at least a main finger" in some 200 plays, p. 223.

After such high hopes had been raised it was with a feeling of disappointment that on first opening the volume it proved to be simply a collection of essays. One expected from the title a more unified presentation of the epoch than the author has attempted. We were prepared from the announcement of the "*magnum opus*" in the "British Weekly" to find a number of essays; it is a pity, notwithstanding, that this is all we get, for none is better equipped with first hand intimate knowledge of this Golden Age of English Literature to be able to give us a comprehensive and worthy account of the period and to delineate the interdependence of its writers and their influence on each other, than Swinburne. As it is we are only permitted to view one peak at a time on this great central table-land of our literature: and, this is a day of cinematograph blends, not the exhibition of the one-picture-at-a-time old-fashioned magic lantern!

But we cannot expect Mr. Swinburne to be other than he is, or than he desires to be. His intention it is clear is not to produce a treatise conducted on lines of historical research wherein are ascertained origins and developments. He is attempting individual valuations.

It remains to be said also that a book of this character should never leave the publisher's hands without a complete and well-prepared index, but such a desideratum is wanting. The book, too, would be improved if the titles of the plays referred to in the text were italicised, and perhaps in the case of the most important let in to the text, at the side, as in a former volume on Ben Jonson. Some indication ought most certainly to have been given of the time and place of previous appearance of the essays, and notes of any alterations and additions would have been of interest as giving us an insight probably into the development of the critical faculty of the author or a glimpse of his changed point of view. For example, the essay on Thomas Middleton appeared in the "Nineteenth Century" in January, 1886, and a revised version was printed as an

introduction to certain selected plays of that author in the *Mermaid Series of Dramatists*, while the text in the volume under review differs again from that contained in the "*Mermaid*" volume. The "*Marlowe*" and "*Chapman*" essays are substantially the same as those contributed to the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, while those on Dekker, Webster and Tourneur have been disinterred from the "*Nineteenth Century*." Mr. Swinburne has also previously written other short critiques on Webster and Tourneur in the *Encyclopædia Britannica*.

In all, nine writers are critically examined and in some measure compared—Christopher Marlowe, John Webster, Thomas Dekker, John Marston, Thomas Middleton, William Rowley, Thomas Heywood, George Chapman and Cyril Tourneur (or Turner), and, so far as I have been able to ascertain, the essays on Marston, Rowley and Heywood are new.

The book is dedicated to the memory of Charles Lamb in a prefatory sonnet breathing a spirit of adoration for the great and gifted critic.

When stark oblivion froze above their names
 Whose glory shone round Shakespeare's, bright as now,
 One eye beheld their light shine full as fame's,
 One hand unveiled it: this did none but thou.
 Love, stronger than forgetfulness and sleep,
 Rose, and bade memory rise, and England hear:
 And all the harvest left so long to reap
 Shone ripe and rich in every sheaf and ear.

A child it was who first by grace of thine
 Communed with gods who share with thee their shrine:
 Elder than thou wast ever now I am,
 Now that I lay before thee in thanksgiving
 Praise of dead men divine and everliving
 Whose praise is thine as thine is theirs, Charles Lamb.

We all know that Mr. Swinburne is an enthusiastic admirer and he has often expressed his appreciation in no

unmeasured terms, as for instance, in his sonnets on certain of the writers above mentioned, but I question whether he has ever instilled so much tender affection into any lines he has ever written, as we find here. "Elia" touches the tenderest chords of our being and they respond in sympathetic harmony with his gentle spirit. It is not surprising, therefore, to find Swinburne re-echoing the tones of the beloved guide of his youth into that bracing land, with, as he himself would put it, "the strong sun and sharp wind, which reared the fellows and followers of Shakespeare."

Mr. Swinburne expresses the conviction that Lamb "is the greatest critic of dramatic poetry that ever lived and wrote," and again and again does he refer in the highest terms of commendation to his marvellous powers. "His word of praise is priceless;" "his judgment all but impeccable," "all but infallible;" "his critical genius unerring and unequalled;" or, "Lamb was not less right than usual when he said that Dekker 'had poetry enough for anything.'"

He points out that the qualities which evoke Lamb's admiration are "sweet-tempered manliness and noble kindliness," while "the pathetic and heroic," as Middleton's "A Fair Quarrel," "received memorable appreciation at his hands."

As regards the period covered by the term the "Age of Shakespeare," it is approximately 1590—1640. Marlowe, who, born in the same year as Shakespeare, namely 1564, died in 1593, is the first on the list, and Thos. Heywood, who, if he died in 1650, is the latest survivor of the writers included in the book.

The names of Massinger, Beaumont and Fletcher, Ford, and Shirley are missing, and also Ben Jonson's, but he has been honoured by a separate "study" in a small volume.

Shakespeare, likewise, has received separate attention, in a previous work, but his great presence is always with

us as we peruse these essays, for, his work is the standard, by which all other Elizabethan dramas and poetry must inevitably be judged, and so intimately are the writers associated with the greatest of them all, that, Webster, according to Swinburne, becomes "a limb of Shakespeare, and that limb his right arm, for he possesses qualities in which he is not less certainly or less unmistakably pre-eminent than the greater;" while Dekker, creating "treasure-houses of verses like jewels, bright as tears, and sweet as flowers," writes with his right hand in the left hand of Shakespeare. And so on right through the book, the relationship, and resemblance in work, is never lost sight of. Marlowe it was, who "prepared the way and made the paths straight for Shakespeare;" "the crowning gift of imagination was possessed by Webster along with Shakespeare in a greater degree than by any poets of their time;" "for gentle grace of inspiration and vivid force of realism Dekker is eclipsed at his very best by Shakespeare's self alone."

"Heywood had the homely and noble realism, the heartiness and humour, the sturdy sympathy and joyful pride of Shakespeare in his most English mood of patriotic and historic loyalty;" "Marston's style has notes and touches in the compass of its course not unworthy of Webster or Tourneur or even Shakespeare himself." These are words of high praise, and our critic is evidently enraptured with his work, and head over ears in love with his authors. His critical attitude is further well illustrated by his opening sentence in the essay on Middleton.

"If it be true, as we are told on high authority, that the greatest glory of England is her literature, and the greatest glory of English literature is its poetry, it is not less true that the greatest glory of English poetry lies rather in its dramatic than its epic or its lyric triumphs. The name of Shakespeare is above the names of even Milton and Coleridge and Shelley: and the names of his comrades in art and their immediate successors are above all but the highest names in any other province of our

song. There is such an overflowing life, such a superb exuberance of abounding and exulting strength, in the dramatic poetry of the half-century extending from 1590 to 1640, that all other epochs of English literature seem as it were but half awake and half alive by comparison with this generation of giants and of gods."

However justifiable our strictures upon the plan and title of the book may be, these essays are work we would not willingly let die. In compact form we now have the matured opinion of a poet of the first rank and an admitted genius in the technique of his art, while his unsurpassed knowledge of the language has served him to good purpose in the verbal criticism of some doubtful and obscure passages.

It will have already been made apparent that Mr. Swinburne's criticism is not that of a stiff, cold, calculating formalism, marked by trivial artificialities and dull pedantry. Rather it is characterised by an exuberant fancy and imagination which intuitively perceives and applauds the best, but, exuberant though it be, it is still marked with precision and a keen eye for the fine shades and texture of the production he is examining. Therefore, while he calls attention in glowing terms to what is worthy of admiration, he does not fail to point out what he considers valueless and unsuccessful, or, even strongly to condemn in case of need, for in the great Elizabethan playwrights there is an astounding unevenness in the quality of the work, and side by side with the finest efforts you find work of the most slovenly description. And in no writer is this so apparent as John Marston, for of him we are informed: "No sooner has he said anything especially beautiful, pathetic, or sublime, than the evil genius must needs take his turn, exact as it were the forfeit of his bond, impel the poet into some sheer perversity, and deface the flow and form of the verse with some preposterous crudity and flatulence of phrase which would discredit the most incapable or the most fantastic novice."

Then, returning later to the same theme, and quoting from what he describes as "the most astonishing and bewildering" fourth act of "Antonio and Mellida," some delicately beautiful lines, he says, "then follows a passage of sheer gibberish; then a dialogue of the noblest and most dramatic eloquence; then a chaotic alternation of sense and nonsense, bad Italian and mixed English, abject farce and dignified rhetoric, spirited simplicity and bombastic jargon."

More forcible evidence of Swinburne's capabilities as a critic attempting to justly appraise a writer so full of contradiction, it would be difficult to find than in the passage here given. The language is vigorous, violent if you will, but the good and ill are clearly placed side by side, and the verdict has the appearance of justice, and witnesses to his critical acumen.

One cannot pass by, without a word, Mr. Swinburne's stern unbending attitude towards what we will mildly term the lapses from virtue on the part of writers of the period, especially as we remember having read a defence he had to make for himself against the charge of writing "indecent" and "blasphemous," and "especially horrible poems." Whether he justified or not his dramatic presentation of his subjects is not for us to consider at the moment. The striking feature was the sincerity of his reply to the impeachment of his detractors, but, if any suspected his honesty in this matter they may now learn how utterly Mr. Swinburne abhors and condemns the filthy and gross; and, what he hates he hates strongly. One wonders if he would ever permit himself even, as would Charles Lamb, for instance, "to take for a season an airing outside the diocese of strict conscience."

In his former work on Jonson his attitude has been made manifest, and, in quoting Sir Walter Scott's charge against "rare" Ben that "he was filthy and gross in his pleasantry," Mr. Swinburne tells us, that, until he had undertaken to give to the best of his ability a full and fair account of

Jonson's works, he had never forced himself to read certain pages which had called forth Scott's strong condemnation, and follows up with "it is nothing less than lamentable that so great an English writer as Ben Jonson should ever have taken the plunge of a Parisian diver into the cess-pool: but it is as necessary to register as it is natural to deplore that he did so."

The note struck here recurs not infrequently in this later volume, betraying if possible a still stronger instinctive recoil from the gross and vicious, as when he recalls that Rowley wrote a play containing farce of "intolerable grossness," and that plays in Dodsley's Collection" are encumbered with heaps of leaden dulness and such bestial filth as no decent scavenger and no rational nightman would dream of sweeping back into sight and smell of any possible reader." There is no need to pursue this matter further except to remark that sufficient has been here said to show that Swinburne knows, and none better, that filth cannot and will not be tolerated, and, if a writer wallow in the mire, though he may gain temporary acceptance, in the opinion of the best of posterity's critics, should his work live at all, it will be denounced for blemishes on this score, and in proportion as they exist, will his fame be tarnished. Shakespeare lives on because, while holding up the mirror to nature he never makes vice seem pleasant; and he is strong, healthy and virile, a poet true to noble ideals and endowed with a fine sense of the nobility and grandeur of true manhood. To say that in these things he was in advance of his time would be to cast a slur unworthily upon his period; and, further, that we are better to-day than Shakespeare's compatriots and contemporaries might be a proposition hard to defend, if confronted with some of the twentieth century novels so insidiously immoral and undoubtedly more degrading than the work of "intolerable grossness" of the men of Shakespeare's time.

Again, features that always evoke from Mr. Swinburne

a sympathetic and congratulatory word are spontaneity and simplicity. He finds Marlowe's "Faustus" remarkable for singleness of aim and simplicity of construction, and in a noteworthy essay on Dekker, characterised by Professor Herford as the most striking in the series, it is Dekker's "spontaneous refinement" and "exquisite simplicity of expression" that crown the brilliant qualities that this writer displayed. Marston, too, could write with "sonorous simplicity," and Swinburne is irritated with him when he fails to write in that "style of purest and noblest simplicity" in which he was so great an adept.

If some of our modern poets, with whose involved, incomprehensible utterances we are favoured from time to time in reviews of their work (for we are not persuaded to buy their effusions), read these criticisms, they would receive suggestions of the vastest importance to them in the exercise of their art, and if they could then achieve simplicity of construction and expression and its complementary virtue of spontaneousness, they and the readers would profit by the lesson taught them, provided always that they have a message to proclaim. Mr. Swinburne, with sure instinct for the essentials, has laid stress on one of the most marked traits of the great Elizabethan dramatists, for successful simplicity is the hall-mark of genuinely great work.

We have spoken of Mr. Swinburne's equipment for his task, and this he has gained from his knowledge of these writers acquired through many years, since as a child he first communed with them, but, and even to a greater extent than one might anticipate, he has drawn upon his great storehouse of learning and introduced names for purposes of comparison from Greek, German, French, and American literature in a prodigal and praiseworthy fashion, though he occasionally allows his self-control to escape him, when sarcasm and invective rush from the vials of his wrath with something of torrential force. Euripides, for example, "the degenerate tragedian of

Athens," as he is styled, "compared to the second tragic dramatist of England, is as a mutilated monkey to a well-made man."

The several references to Byron are of a scarcely less virulent type. Some of his turns of phrases are "abortions," while Tourneur, in certain respects, was "little more than a better sort of Byron; a quack less impudent, but not less transparent than the less inspired and more inflated ventriloquist of *'Childe Harold's Pilgrimage'*; whereas it is hardly too much to say that the earnest and fiery intensity of Tourneur's moral rhetoric is no less mistakeable than the blatant and flatulent ineptitude of Byron's."

Amongst other writers mentioned is Mark Twain, whose name is coupled with that of Martin Tupper. Referring to the work done by Thomas Heywood in the literary department of a Lord Mayor's show, as he designates it, we read that "the text of these pageants must be as barren and . . . as tedious a subject of study as the lucubrations of the very dullest English moralist or American humourist, a course of reading digestible only by such constitutions as could survive and assimilate a diet of Martin Tupper and Mark Twain."

These somewhat splenetic animadversions against men, about whom, many better and many wiser things are said, these violent ebullitions of wrath, these marked deviations from the path of strict critical rectitude, are hardly expected of one who has written, "I have never been able to see what should attract men to the profession of criticism but the noble pleasure of praising." But, the gods are not untouched with faults and weaknesses at times—and Swinburne is only a mortal! Over-emphasised exaggeration, either in praising or blaming, is a leading note of his criticism.

The last point to which we would draw attention is a reference to the audiences of Shakespeare's day. One often wonders in watching a Shakespearean performance (or is

representation the word?) to what extent the bulk of the audience really appreciates the play as a whole, to say nothing of the finer points on philosophy and morals, and is it not often the case that it is the scene-painter, costumier, and stage-manager who determine by their embellishments, the length of the run?

Now, Dr. Johnson was of opinion that "very few of his (*i.e.*, Shakespeare's) lines were difficult to his audience," and he is not, in saying this, alluding merely to the verbal meaning of phrases of doubtful significance to us to-day for the statement follows a sentence in which he particularises fulness of idea and rapidity of imagination as among the causes of the obscurity of Shakespeare. Swinburne is not less eulogistic of these people.

"Nothing in the age of Shakespeare," he writes, "is so difficult for an Englishman of our own age to realise as the temper, the intelligence, the serious and refined elevation of the audience which was at once capable of enjoying and applauding the roughest and coarsest kinds of pleasantries, the rudest and crudest scenes of violence, and yet competent to appreciate the finest and highest reaches of poetry, the subtlest and most sustained allusions of ethical or political symbolism."

This is high praise and gives rise to certain comparative reflections, which, it is to be feared, are not flattering to our own time. One almost regrets that our lot has been cast in the present prosaic age, and is set longing to have walked London streets in that golden time and to have lived and talked with those people. But oh, to have dropped in at the Mermaid to mingle with the choice spirits which foregathered there, so that we could recount

What things have we seen
Done at the Mermaid! heard words that have been
So nimble, and so full of subtle flame,
As if that every one from whence they came
Had meant to put his whole wit in a jest,
And had resolved to live a fool the rest
Of his dull life.

This has not been our good fortune, but some of the best these men have thought has been handed down through the generations for our delight, and a more interesting and inspiring expounder of their works we could not desire than the writer of these essays, the perusal of which gives us too, a deeper and fuller insight into the quality of the dramatic output of England when the dramatic instinct was the most strongly developed and fraught with the richest results.





RANDOM IMPRESSIONS OF PRESENT-DAY MUSICAL COMEDY.

By J. J. RICHARDSON.

THE most pronounced feature of our stage to-day is the unrivalled popularity of what are called Musical Comedies.

My object is not to offer any opinion or criticism of such entertainments, but to put before the reader some of the impressions that have been left upon my mind after watching their performance.

Though the name of Musical Comedy has been given to the various but very similar productions which crowd our theatres, and revel in the names of all sorts of girls—Shop Girls, Country Girls, Earls and Girls, and Girls from all sorts of places to girls who have married so successfully that one at least has become a "Merry Widow,"—it must, I think, be admitted that there is found in their composition a plentiful lack of both music and comedy.

Despite this deficiency they are evidently either works that are most difficult to create, or we have fallen on most degenerate times—for no one living man is equal to the task. Our earlier playwrights, with few exceptions, worked single handed. Shakespeare wrote nearly all his plays without help, unless it be true that Bacon wrote them for him. But to-day it needs a syndicate to construct a Musical Comedy.

The method, as I understand it, is for one author to devise what is called the plot, for another to furnish the dialogue, and for others to write what are advertised as the lyrics. Then several musicians are employed to com-

pose the various kinds of music required, painters to provide the very elaborate scenery and costumiers to make up the gorgeous dresses.

All this being accomplished it only remains to engage two or three clever comedians who will kindly ignore what the authors have been to the trouble of writing, and give to the play some modicum of humour and gaiety.

The most evident fact about musical comedies is that they have dispensed with the old formula of holding the mirror up to Nature. They make no attempt to show the form and pressure of the times. They avoid all sordid realism, and keep as far as possible away from the dingy, depressing facts of Life. Their aim is to hold aloft the bright banner of the Ideal. Let me give you an instance of what I mean.

The first thing an Englishman does when he gets up in the morning is to ascertain the state of the weather. The first topic of conversation that he starts when he meets you is upon the actualities and possibilities of the weather. The daily newspapers, though their oft-declared mission is to elevate and instruct mankind, pander to his taste by putting the forecast of the weather in the most prominent part of their sheet, so that it can be seen without any trouble. I am not going to digress into any observations on the English weather. What I wish to point out is that in Musical Comedy the weather is always ideal. There is none of the rain we are so familiar with, there are no dull, foggy, dismal days. The scenes are always bathed in perpetual sunshine.

We are almost oppressed by the sun's brilliancy, it is so strange to our eyes. If there is a prospect of the sea, then how deliciously blue is the water. And if there are trees how vivid is the colour of their leaves, and how unbrageously they spread themselves about. You never hear the song of the birds, but that I am told we ought not to expect, for birds do not sing in sunny climes. They rely for their attractions on their plumage.

I have often wondered in passing the doors of our theatres on a wet miserable afternoon why such crowds, composed chiefly of women, are waiting, like the Peri at the gate of Heaven disconsolately, to get into a matinee performance of a musical comedy. It must be their desire for those three hours of continuous sunshine.

Along with the very pleasant impression of its being always fine weather comes the obvious fact that in the gay land of Musical Comedy no one seems burdened with any anxiety as to earning a living, nor worried by having a lot of work to do.

No matter whether the scene be an English village, or a German town, or an Italian quay-side, an officer in command of a dozen soldiers has only to make his appearance when the whole of the villagers, or townsfolk, or sailors and fishermen at once crowd on to the stage, and show unmistakable signs of interest in what is going to happen.

Of course I know that in real life the sound of a brass band, or the alarm-bell of a fire engine, or even the fratching of two disorderly women before the police can arrive, is enough to bring innumerable people out of all the neighbouring bye streets, whilst a cup-tie on any working day of the week almost dislocates some forms of industry. But after all the great bulk of people we know have to devote a considerable portion of their time to work, or the semblance of it.

But in Musical Comedy there seems no such sad necessity. Its inhabitants—men, women and girls—are at all times ready to bustle on to the stage if the hero calls for unlimited liquor, or the heroine, in trouble over a disappointing love affair, wishes to dilate upon her woes, or the end of an act is near, and the curtain must descend upon a crowded and vivacious scene. How amid such distractions the men find time to earn a living, or their wives to attend to household duties and bring up children, or the girls to milk the cows and look after the chickens, has always been a puzzle to me. Yet they all look fine and

healthy, and are invariably well dressed. They never come on in dirty working clothes, and, considering the frequency of their appearances, I don't see how they can have had time to go home and change, and put on their best things as we do if we are bidden to a wedding, or have to attend a funeral. The only explanation I can offer is that they have attained to the Socialist's ideal, of a state where money does not exist, and it is only needful to work two hours a day; and that they put in these two hours in the early morning.

On one of these points I think I can offer full confirmation. We will suppose the scene to be an English village with, as usual, the village "pub" in the foreground and tables and seats outside the inn. Enter officer with soldiers, followed immediately by all the villagers. This naturally brings out the rubicund mine host of the Spotted Pig and his lovely and dashing daughter. And how beautiful are the landlord's daughters of Musical Comedy, and how lovely are all her girl friends. The handsome officer at once pays the daughter certain delicate and affectionate attentions, whilst her girl friends look on as if they would like to share them with her. Then the officer remembers his men, as a good officer should, and orders liquor to be brought. Huge flagons of wine or foaming October are brought in, and the men, who seem to have excellent thirsts, due of course to the sunny clime, are not at all backward in tilting them over their noses.

Yet no one ever pays, and the landlord causes no trouble. Now when I go in for similar refreshment I get a very modest quantity of "Black and White" for fourpence, or have to pay threepence for a small bottle of Bass, or Guinness, and in England have to put down my money before sampling the goods. But here the supply is unlimited and the price nil. How does the innkeeper make a living? He certainly cannot be tied to the brewers, or the brewers must be very bad business men, and possessed of wealth beyond the dreams of avarice.

And here we may note a rather curious feature. When the corporal with the huge walrus-like moustache has emptied his flagon, which you can rely upon him doing, he never has to wipe his enormous lip fringe. In real life he would either have to wring it out or dry it with a towel. But his does not appear to get wet. The wine drank in Musical Comedy must be very *dry*.

And here I would like to offer our Socialist friends something of which they are singularly lacking. I would recommend to Messrs. Bernard Shaw and Keir Hardie this sound argument. In this ideal state where there is little work and no money there is an entire absence of poverty and crime; and, on the other hand, a profusion of gaiety and high spirits, and a strong tendency to burst into song. On the slightest provocation they indulge in song or chorus. They have none of the diffidence of guests at an evening party who, when they are asked to sing, begin to excuse themselves on the grounds that they have a sore throat, or have not brought any music. They are too simple-minded to adopt such subterfuges. They are only too ready to oblige.

Now this simple-mindedness helps us to understand another curious and exceptional trait of character, and one which cannot but be admired. When the hero and heroine first meet they of course naturally fall in love, and having done so he wishes to draw her as close as possible, without damaging her beautiful costume more than can be helped, to his manly bosom, and to tell her that if only she will love him all the world will be his. It is a large order, but then they do not dabble in the retail in Musical Comedy.

At this interesting juncture the surrounding villagers do not, in an envious and curious mood, wait to see what is about to happen, as they do in real life, but at once rapidly disperse, and the couple are left on their lonesome, as the saying is. At once they commence to sing that

lovely duet which they have so often rehearsed over together.

Again, when the hero has departed, the heroine's girl friends all rush back to hear about her bit of luck. Now this is very kindly, for it is only human to wish to tell your friends of your good fortune. And we soon learn that the girls are not a bit jealous or envious at the heroine's success. They throng round her with evident good feeling to listen to her story; they show themselves interested in what she has to tell them.

But the proper thing for a heroine to do is *not* to express herself in matter-of-fact talk, but to embody her feelings in song. Therefore she pours out her soul in melody, whilst her girl friends form a semi-circle around her, passing their arms behind one another's waists, and becoming, as it were, a human chain. Then, as they help her to sing the chorus, they slightly oscillate to and fro, and with a graceful rhythmic motion swing their legs up in the air. It might be thought that this was done out of vanity, because they wished to show the goodly proportions of their limbs, and the excellent quality of their under-clothing, but it is not. It is done to enable the conductor of the orchestra to keep his musicians to the correct time.

Should the heroine, as sometimes happens, be a little doubtful of her top notes, one can easily imagine how, in a feminine way, if the girls were jealous, they might stop singing and leave her to get over the difficulty alone. But they are far too chivalrous to do this. On the contrary, they sing all the louder so as to hide the heroine's deficiency, and when the song is finished she is so pleased at their kindly behaviour that she often kisses those that are nearest to her.

But all this kindness and consideration is not confined only to sentient beings; it seems to have also its influence on inanimate objects—on the sun and the moon. If night has come suddenly on, and it is wonderful how rapidly the evenings can close in in Musical Comedy, and the fair

heroine is about to sing a song of how if she were a coon in the moon, or were in the twi-twi-light, the silvery moon at once shines full upon her pretty face and golden locks. Nay, it does even more than that, it is so obliging. It follows her about the stage and illuminates her graceful movements as she adds to the charm of her song by interpolating a vigorous dance. And the sun does just the same for each prominent person, though his efforts are not so obvious in a land where it is always brilliant sunshine.

In addition to these displays of affection there is a freedom and gaiety of manners among the denizens of Musical Comedy land that is very different to what we see in real life. There is none of the cold self-restraint we are so accustomed to. There is an abandon which we never seek to emulate—at least in public. The men think nothing of touching the girls under their dimpled chins with their two forefingers, or of carelessly putting their arms round their waists, and imprinting a kiss upon their peach-like cheeks. And without asserting that the girls really like this freedom of manner they certainly do not make any serious attempt to resent it. I am not going so far as to advise imitation of this gay behaviour, but I cannot help thinking that if we did so it would give an unwonted liveliness and variety to the usual decorous parade each afternoon in St. Ann's Square.

Of course, at first, it would bring those who tried it into unpleasant relations with the police, but in the sacred cause of reform this should not deter those who wish to make the world a much brighter and more cheerful place. No craven fear of the police deters our wives and sisters from carrying out their propaganda, and why should men be less brave? The police are a fine body of men, and the Suffragettes, recognising this, have no hesitation in being seen in their arms.

It is only a matter of getting rid of conventionality, to which we are all such slaves. The only people who have so far made any attempts are the Smart Set, and at

present they confine their manifestations to country houses and high-class hotels. They do not practise their flirtations in the squares of our towns or villages. But no doubt as the world progresses the steadily continued alliance of our youthful aristocrats with the ladies of the Musical Comedy stage will ultimately make for a more lively and picturesque state of things. All real progress is slow, but since Herbert Spencer so lucidly defined Evolution as "an integration of matter and concomitant dissipation of motion, during which the matter passes from an indefinite, incoherent homogeneity to a definite, coherent heterogeneity, and during which the retained motion undergoes a parallel transformation," no reasonable man can refuse to believe in the theory.

There is, therefore, no reason for either pessimism or despair. Let us rather be optimists, and believe that the world, as it grows older, will become a pleasanter place to live in.

Think for a moment of the village maiden as we know her in real life, healthy looking but heavy handed, stout and ungainly, with coarse ankles and big feet. A thoroughly useful girl on a farm, and where a lot of hard work has to be done, but not an object of beauty. Then recall the village maidens of Musical Comedy, so dainty and debonair, so arch in their manners, so charmingly costumed, with high heels to their shoes, short petticoats, and—but I refrain from further details. They will no doubt readily come to most minds. But I ask, why do not statesmen, who are continually decrying the evils arising from the overcrowding of our towns by the influx of the young men from the country, and who keep preaching the gospel of "back to the land," see a very obvious remedy for this state of things? They have only to make the country girl as attractive as she is in Musical Comedy, and what young man of taste and spirit but would at once desert the town and go back to the simple

life and to country pleasures. I suppose that the remedy is so obvious that no statesman would ever think of it.

And whilst I am in the vein of suggestion let me give Mr. Haldane a hint as to the best means of recruiting his Territorial army.

Now from Musical Comedy the military are seldom or never absent. They play a conspicuous part in its life. And I have never heard of there being any difficulty in getting recruits. The reason for this I take to be is that their uniforms are so handsome. They are as gorgeous in colour as a collection of tropical birds, and the officers change theirs as often in the day as an Emperor or a King paying a State visit to his Royal relations. Think for a moment of our own khaki-clad and depressing looking army. How can you expect any spirited youth to join it when he is compelled to wear such clothes? Why, even the suits of clothes provided for convicts are decorated with broad arrows.

Of course I know what Mr. Haldane will say when he hears of my suggestion. He will reply that what he is aiming at is an efficient fighting machine. But what sane youth is going of his own free-will to become merely part of a fighting machine. You might as reasonably ask Miss Maud Allan to dance in a crinoline costume instead of beads. What the young man wants is plenty of fine clothes, and the prospect of lots of fun.

This matter of the clothes we wear is one that has been very much neglected of late, despite Carlyle's philosophical treatise on the subject. There needs a great revision of public opinion on this question of how we ought to dress, and I am glad to see in the newspapers that those most interested are taking up the matter. I mean those worthy people who make them for us—the Tailors. Now in Musical Comedy the more prominent a man's position the more varied the clothes he wears, and the oftener he changes them. This is as it should be. In the course of an evening the leading comedian will adopt

half-a-dozen costumes, from that of a chimney sweep, or a railway guard, to that of a man about town, or a gilded earl.

But with us if a man becomes anything out of the ordinary, say a Doctor, or a Lawyer, a President of a Republic or a Member of Parliament, an undertaker on duty, or a Lord Mayor, he has to eschew such vanities of costume, and content himself with a black frock coat and a silk hat less. It would be difficult, if not impossible, to imagine a romantic form of personal attire.

I have known cases where a man's artistic sensibilities seem to have been so outraged that he has sought to brighten up his dolorous garb by wearing a red tie and brown boots with his frock coat and silk hat. But such originality is not considered good form. The ardent Socialist may affect a red tie, for he usually wears a soft felt hat and a reefer jacket, so deficient is he in any sense of the fitness of things. But no Socialist, not even Mr. Victor Grayson, though his debating cosume is immaculate evening attire, would be dubbed, to use the current phrase, a well dressed man. He may not seem out of place at St. Stephen's, Westminster, but he would in Bond Street or St. James's.

The chief concession I can recall to a departure from this orthodox garb is when on certain occasions a Mayor or a Lord Mayor has to be mixed up in public with a lot of common councillors. Then a massive gold chain, with a huge medal on it, is hung round his neck so as to prevent any possibility of his dignity not being at once recognised by the populace. But such barbaric splendour is of rare occurrence.

With this lack of colour and distinction in the clothes we wear there naturally arises a lack of variety and charm in our daily conversation. For this we are to be pitied, rather than blamed. How could the poets who gathered at the Mermaid tavern in doublet and silken hose, or the Cavaliers of the Restoration, with their ruffles and plumes,

possibly have said anything witty or brilliant if they had been dressed in black frock coats, baggy trousers, and silk hats? They, like ourselves, must then have suffered from depression of spirit. They could never have bandied to and fro the merry quip and jest.

Now-a-days our topics of conversation are almost limited to two—sport, and perhaps trade. There may be an occasional variation due to a Society scandal, or an unsolved murder mystery, but to attempt to discuss any subjects beyond these would stamp a man with singularity and possibly expose him to pity or contempt. Try, for a moment, to imagine what a shock it would be to the occupants of your railway compartment, as you come to town in the morning, if anyone ventured upon a brilliant remark. What a deadly and stifling silence would follow the shock of surprise. Or think of the loss of respect and confidence which would be that business man's portion who indulged in humour. His affairs would soon be in the hands of the Official Receiver.

Once upon a time Kings had merry Jesters in cap and bells. Now His Gracious Majesty has to be content with elderly gentlemen in wigs and gowns, called Judges. Theirs being a job for which old age and incompetency never unfits them they have become our only privileged jesters. No ordinary mortal, or reputable newspaper, would dare otherwise than punctuate their jests, however feeble, with "loud applause." And on such occasions, there is no mention of the Court having to be cleared. Hence the reason why everybody laughs so loudly.

But in Musical Comedy there are no such limitations. There all is sparkling wit and dashing humour. There the funniest man makes the most money. He draws a larger salary than the Prime Minister, and earns almost as much as the leading counsel at the Parliamentary Bar.

I am not going to assert that he is not worthy of his hire for we must not forget his wondrous power of associating ideas in a new and unexpected manner. He excels

in glittering conceits, and by his ingenuity creates amusement out of trifles, and causes laughter by his clever surprises. With him it is truly the unexpected that happens.

Permit me, in conclusion, to offer you a sample of his genius. The funny man is in one of his confidential moods. He is telling his friend that he believes in unlucky numbers, and that in his case his unlucky number is 18. He goes on to illustrate this by saying that when recently crossing the Channel he suffered three times from mal-de-mer. The friend sympathises with him, as a friend should, but is at a loss to discern the connection between his three attacks of mal-de-mer and his unlucky number. Then comes the brilliant and witty reply, "Don't you know three sick's are 18."

I can recall nothing approaching this in the whole range of the plays of the Elizabethan dramatists.





EDGAR ALLAN POE.

By B. A. REDFERN.

"Not only do I think it paradoxical to speak of a man of genius as personally ignoble, but I confidently maintain that the highest genius is but the loftiest moral nobility."

—*Marginalia*, E. A. P.

SO wrote one who for half a century was acknowledged—though somewhat grudgingly—to be a man of genius, yet was almost universally held to be personally ignoble. This was Edgar Allan Poe who came into the world a hundred years ago, and of whom we have now, sixty years after his death, such full accounts of his career, and examples of his works, as enable us to form right judgments of them.

English opinion of Poe's personal character was until recent years based upon certain notices, including a so-called "Memoir of Edgar Poe" which appeared soon after his death. In these the worst possible construction was put upon all his sayings, doings or experiences. He was referred to in the "Memoir" as one "whose death might startle many, but that few would be grieved by it"; "one who had no moral susceptibility"; "who never expressed reverence"; "in whom there were no manifestations of conscience"; and "who exhibited scarcely any virtue in either his life or his writings." This presentment of Poe has since been stamped by those who knew him best as "an immortal infamy"; "a collection of garbled quotations, perverted facts and baseless assumptions"; whilst its author has been proclaimed to be "a proved liar."

This Ghoul was an American bearing the fitting name of Rufus Griswold, who was revenging himself on Poe for supposed slights, but there is not even that excuse for the villainous attack on his memory which appeared in the "Edinburgh Review" in 1858; or for the Rev. George Gilfillan's statement that Poe "caused the death of his wife, so that he might have a theme for his 'Raven,'" especially when we discover that the poem referred to was published more than two years before that sad event. Fortunately the calumnies of these and other ghouls have now been refuted, and the trustworthy evidence now to hand presents Poe in a much more favourable light.

Here is a brief summary of his life story. His father, the scion of a race, notable in many of its individuals for intellectual brilliancy, quixotism, and—be it said—intemperance, married, when he was eighteen years of age, an English actress known as Miss Arnold, who died in the same year as her husband (1811), when Edgar was only two years old. Being thus left a penniless orphan, the child became dependent on a rich relative named Allan, who was quite unsuited to take charge of the eaglet he introduced into his dull aviary, but Mrs. Allan made amends for some of his shortcomings as a guardian. In 1815 the Allans removed to England, taking Edgar with them, and the next five years of school life spent amid rural surroundings were possibly the happiest, as they were certainly the most profitable, of the poet's life.

Here, as we gather from his autobiographical story of "William Wilson," he seems to have been distinguished, rather than popular, amongst his schoolmates, and he returned to America with a good groundwork of classical and scientific knowledge, and the highest class honours. In after years he wrote, in sad accents: "It gives me as much pleasure as I can now in any manner experience, to dwell upon minute recollections of the School and its concerns."

His talents and accomplishments at the age of twelve

were extraordinary, and his guardian delighted in their exhibition, but took little further notice of the youth who was then considered—and believed himself—to be the heir to Mr. Allan's many possessions. Of this period Poe says, "My voice was then a household law, and at an age when few children have abandoned their leading strings, I was left to the guidance of my own will and became in all but name, the master of my own actions." Thus prematurely and unfortunately

Lord of himself, that heritage of woe.

he spent a year or two of pampered luxury, alternated with occasional attendance at a private academy in Richmond, Virginia, where the Allans lived, until 1826, when he was matriculated at the University of Virginia. There he found himself amongst fellow students, chiefly rich Southerners, and he fell readily into the fastest set of these haughty young aristocrats. He incurred some gambling debts which his guardian refused to pay, and a quarrel ensued which ended in Poe's going out into the world disinherited, and practically destitute. It may be noted here that the Secretary of the University when asked at a later date spoke highly of Poe's ability, industry and general good character as a student, but then remarked that he had an "ungovernable passion for card-playing."

After leaving his old home—if we may so call it—he is next heard of from Boston, and later on from Baltimore and New York, and then he is known to have started off for Europe with the design of helping the Greeks in their struggle for independence. Of what occurred to him afterwards until the summer of 1827, when he seems to have returned to America, there is no record, unless we may take as such some references here and there in his writings to certain scenes, personages, or events, in the Old World. He made an attempt about this time (1827) to maintain himself by his literary work, but failing to do

so he enlisted in the U. S. Army to become—*mirabile dictu*—in less than two years a Sergeant-Major.

In the meantime his quarrel with Mr. Allan having been patched up to some extent, the latter in 1830 procured the youth a cadetship at the Military College of West Point, where he served with zeal, and did his duty admirably for some months, but gradually becoming tired of the irksome restraints, and the strict routine, he expressed a wish to resign. Permission to do so was refused by Mr. Allan, and Poe ever a true "Imp of the Perverse," acted in such a way as to bring about his own condemnation for wilful disobedience and neglect of duty by a Court Martial, at which he pleaded "Guilty." He was dismissed the Service, as he had planned to be, and again destitute, he turned seriously to the pursuit of literature for the means of existence.

In 1833 he won a prize of one hundred dollars offered for the best short story with his "M.S. found in a Bottle," and at the same time he sent in a poem which was adjudged to be the best of those offered for another prize, which, however, he did not get. Thenceforward tales, poems, essays, came from his pen in rapid succession, and though ill-paid for any of these, he was soon in possession of such an income as he thought warranted him in getting married. His beautiful but fragile cousin, Virginia Clemm, then a girl of fifteen, became his wife, and the story of their mutual and abiding love forms the most pleasing feature of Poe's career. As a mere contributor to American journals Poe was always a success, and he increased the issue of all those for which he wrote, but certain ventures which he made as proprietor or editor were sad failures.

Amongst other of his writings some trenchant criticisms of certain literary log-rollers brought him enemies, one of whom replied in such terms as provoked Poe to an action at law which he won with damages of two hundred and twenty-five dollars and costs.

The last few years of his life were spent in a hard and eventually hopeless struggle against misfortunes of many kinds. He was subjected to a great mental strain, to constant excitement abroad, and to wearing anxiety at home, for the delicacy of his wife's health had now developed into a mortal illness. His own powers of body and mind had also begun to fail, and he occasionally sought an anodyne for mental and physical anguish in the use of stimulants. After the death of his wife, which occurred in 1847, his literary abilities declined, his lapses from sobriety became more frequent, and the results on his health and reputation were disastrous. He died at the Hospital in Baltimore on the 7th of October, 1849, from inflammation of the brain following upon exposure whilst in a fit of intoxication.

It will be seen from the above survey that his inherited tendencies and natural temperament, the character of his early training and environment, and the untoward happenings of his later life, were all alike unfavourable for the production of a being happy in himself, or likely to afford a worthy example for others, and, indeed, some readers of Poe's story will be surprised to find that he did *not* develop into the utterly ignoble creature he was once supposed to be. The pictures or descriptions of his person show us a man of fine figure and handsome features including remarkable luminous eyes, and a wide spread lofty brow; who was careful and neat, even with a touch of dandyism in his attire, and who had claims to be considered an athlete, especially as a long distance swimmer. One whose manner with strangers or in Society was distant and reserved, conveying the impression that his thoughts were gloomily introspective, or that he was too conscious of his own powers (as compared with those of the men about him) to be agreeable; and it is certain that he was not of those "who suffer fools gladly." With his intimates, however, he was always anxious for, and even

morbidly sensitive to, affection, whilst he was at all times readily responsive to what he recognised as good will.

He was a devoted lover and husband, and the chivalrous much loved friend of many good and noble women. Amongst these were Mrs. Allan, his foster-mother; Mrs. Stannard, a woman of letters, to whom his youthful poem of "Helen" was addressed; Mrs. Whitman, one of his biographers; and especially that loyal soul Mrs. Clemm, his aunt and mother-in-law, who stood by him through his worst hours with untiring devotion.

As a man with men, those who knew him best speak of him as "brave," "courteous," "a faithful friend." In his business habits he is said to have been "punctual," "painstaking," "industrious" by one friend, though another, after a generally eulogistic reference, describes him as "irregular," "eccentric," "querulous." N. P. Willis, the poet and editor, says of him: "We loved the man for his fidelity . . . we were reluctant to part with him." Says the owner of "Graham's Magazine": "He cared little for money, and knew less of its value." Many others whose opinions are valuable have left on record tributes to his morality, his humanity, and his honesty, but enough evidence had been already given to prove that he had many of the qualities which go to make up a gentleman.

And yet, as we have seen, this being of culture, genius, and many virtues, died the death of a vagabond.

We have had, in our English men of letters, some whose experiences have resembled those of Poe, including Savage, Chatterton, De Quincey, Francis Thompson, and others, but none of them has left behind such a record of self-martyrdom as this of the gifted American.

He always bitterly repented his intemperate outbreaks, and sought to make full amends for neglect of duties, or other of their consequences, but the horrors of remorse served only to further sap his will power for restraint. Stimulants were to him more potent in effect, because in

times of excitement he suffered from an old lesion on the brain. "A less delicate organisation than his," says one who knew him best, "might have borne without injury what, to him, was maddening," and Poe says in one of his letters: "I have absolutely no pleasure in the stimulants in which I sometimes so madly indulge. It has been in the desperate attempt to escape from torturing memories of wrong, injustice and imputed dishonour, from a sense of insupportable loneliness, and a dread of some strange impending doom."

Turning from the man to his works, which consist chiefly of tales, poems, and criticism, we may say of them generally that they all exhibit wide scholarship, and fine craftsmanship, on the part of the author, but that there is little doubt that his fame will chiefly rest upon his ability as a writer of short stories, for in these he has no equal in any literature. In speaking of them he says: "I desire not so much to tell a story as to produce an effect," on which it may be remarked that the conduct of the story leading up to the desired effect is in his case always of a masterly kind. In invention, artistic construction, dramatic force, and apt use of science—especially of psychology—these stories are unique, and they stamp their author as an original and exceptional genius. His insight regarding the mental processes of his characters, and his clear—if occasionally overloaded—expression of them are amongst their notable features. His themes are often repellent, but their treatment is such that the most timid or fastidious reader, who ventures upon their perusal, will find them at least interesting, if not absorbing, or even positively fascinating.

They deal chiefly with the darker experiences of humanity, but there are several in which comedy is predominant, and there are few in which there is not an element of humour, though it may only be of the sardonic kind. Romantic, adventurous, picturesque, mystical, grotesque, gruesome, and even playful, episodes will be

found in them, but all his work is marked at some point with the author's sombre personality, and there is in none of them any sign of that "joy of life" which is the most useful possession of many less well-endowed sons of genius.

The tales are vivid, impressive, entertaining, but the pleasure they give the reader is of the kind which is not far removed from pain, and the emotions chiefly stirred are those of wonder, terror and pity. A longer story by Poe—of some two hundred pages—entitled "The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym," which has all the air of a simple statement of fact, is a thrilling account of marvellous adventures in the Antarctic Seas. It has all the best qualities of the author and deserves more attention than it has received from English readers. Poe has been accused of plagiarism in some of his more wildly imaginative stories—a charge which however has been fully disproved, but he probably owes something at least to his liking for and intimate acquaintance with the works of De Foe and Balzac, whilst—per contra—it may be claimed for him that his debtors in modern fiction are innumerable. Of these the names which come most readily to mind are those of Maupassant, Stevenson, Jules Verne, Grant Allen, H. G. Wells, Conan Doyle, and Kipling. Of writers in other departments than fiction one might mention Swinburne, Phillips, Sardou, Baudelaire and many others, chiefly Frenchmen in this conjunction.

Poe's verse is not of great extent, but it is throughout of excellent quality, though some of it was written in extreme youth. None of it is without that "haunting charm," or that carefully wrought perfection of form which distinguish his more widely known poems of "The Raven," "Lenore," and "The Bells," and there is melody, rich imagery, and exquisite finish, in every stanza. He says in the preface to his poems: "With me poetry has been, not a purpose, but a passion," and we find that this passion was one of heart-searching intensity. He had a theory, upon which he laid great stress, to the effect that

the poetry of words was "The Rhythmic Creation of Beauty," and that sadness was inseparably connected with all its higher manifestations. However true that may be, we find in "The Haunted Palace," "Ulalume," and the simply-worded but deeply pathetic "Annabel Lee," a beauty in melancholy of the most ravishing kind.

The whole of his verse, including scenes from an unfinished drama, entitled "Politian," can be read in a single evening; it contains most melodiously expressed thoughts and suggestions which may produce impressions for a life time.

Of Poe's criticism, Graham says: "It was in the world of mind that he was king, and with a fierce audacity he felt and proclaimed himself autocrat. As critic he was supreme." . . . "In combating what he conceived to be error, he used the strongest word that presented itself, even in conversation. He laboured not so much to reform as to exterminate." And Lowell says: "He sometimes seemed to mistake his vial of prussic acid for his inkstand." There is little cause for wonder that a critic of this kind should have his enemies, and he had many, of whom some never forgave him during his life, whilst there were others, who as we have seen, pursued him with virulent hate after death.

His literary judgments, however, were seldom at fault, and later critics have confirmed most of them, although at the time they were thought by many who knew the writer, to be presumptuous, ill natured, and even ungrateful. He ever spoke plainly the truth as it appeared to him, extending the same treatment to all, were they famed or obscure, intimates or enemies, and on these lines he as often expressed commendation as condemnation.

It is interesting to note that, in a highly appreciative notice of Dickens, he predicted from the introductory pages of "Barnaby Rudge," the future course of the story, in such a way, as to make Dickens ask if "Poe were the Devil." Had Poe lived until the "Mystery of Edwin

Drood" had been left unsolved by its author, he would doubtless have been found amongst the many who, with fewer chances of success, have attempted its solution.

His essays on "The Poetic Principle," "The Rationale of Verse," and "The Philosophy of Composition," are valuable contributions to the study of literature, which should be read by all who aspire to the writing of verse, for they will be found specially illuminative on many matters in the attempted elucidation of which other experts are obscure. "The Philosophy of Composition" is illustrated by an analysis of the processes through which that highly wrought gem of Art, his poem of "The Raven," was perfected.

His last work entitled "Eureka, an Essay on the Material and Spiritual Universe," was written when his mental powers had begun to decay, and there is little in it which is of any value to the reader of to-day. Although it contains some originality of thought, and much ingenious speculation, it is more like the wild whirling rhapsody of a visionary than that convincing outcome of much knowledge, deep thought, and sound reasoning, which he had set out to write, in the fond hope that it would be an eternal monument to his fame.

Tennyson has said: "Edgar Poe is—taking his prose and poetry together—the most original American genius," to which saying we may give full and ready assent, but it may be remarked—*en passant*—that there is nothing in the nature or the treatment of Poe's themes to mark him distinctly as an American. He was one of the world's men of genius whose works are admired and held in honour at least as greatly in other continents as in his own.

And now, in coming to the end of these notes, the writer has only to say further that without doubt Poe's possession of fine abilities and qualities, only intensified the troubles brought about by his faults and unavoidable misfortunes,

and that he probably suffered as much from the war set up by these in his nature, as from that dominant vice which brought him to his premature death.

The look, the air that frets thy sight,
May be a token that below
The soul has closed in deadly fray
With some infernal fiery foe,
Whose glance would scorch thy smiling grace
And cast thee shuddering on thy face.

—*Judge Not.*





THE SWORD, THE HOARD, AND THE RING,
IN ANCIENT ROMANCE.

By W. NOEL JOHNSON.

LADY CHARLOTTE GUEST held the opinion that the Cymric nation has strong claims to be considered the Cradle of European Romance. Whether European Romance had its birth among this people or not, it is certain that their Romantic stories, or at least the mythical elements of those stories, carry us back to remote antiquity.

But Romantic poems and stories have come down to us from well-nigh all parts of Europe, especially in the west and the north—from Scandinavia, Germany, Spain, Ireland, and from France and Great Britain—which are, apart from Brittany, Wales and Cornwall, tremulous with age, and shrouded in a mysterious atmosphere of wonder-thought and fantastic credulity, far removed from our own.

It is curious to note that the word *Romance*, which is derived from the Roman or Latin tongue, comes to us from a country singularly bare of Romantic literature; for, excepting in the North of Italy, we find in that country few or no remains of ancient Romance.

The people of Spain and France, who replaced their rude and barbarous manners by Roman culture, eagerly forsook the language of their race to adopt that of Italy. The modified forms of the Latin tongue which resulted from this adoption, were known as Romance, a term

especially applied to the Roman dialect of France, owing doubtless to its central position making it more widely known.

When the Normans had settled in France, and began to cultivate higher forms of life and manners than those of depredation and turbulence, the history and spirit of the new order of things found expression in rude narrative poems, which were called *Romances*. That is, the meaning of the word *Romance* changed, it became more inclusive, and a term which expressed the common language of the people was applied to a special form of composition in that language.

At a later period, when such poems were narrated in prose, these also were called *Romances*. These poems and narratives, known as *Romances*, which were composed in Romance—that is, in dialects derived from the vulgar Latin—were thus distinguished from works written in book-Latin, which had hitherto been used for literary purposes. So much for the derivation and significance of the word.

The modern use of the term *Romance*, as applied to literature, conveys a meaning which was not present to the people of the past, or only to a small portion of them.

To us a *Romance* contains something extraordinary or wonderful—extravagant adventures or miraculous events—removed from the experience of everyday life. It is true the ancient *Romances* contain such events and adventures—hence our use of the word—but to the Scalds and Bards they were neither extraordinary nor miraculous. There was no such thing as “law,” regarding natural phenomena, in the minds of the people; no true consciousness of cause and effect. Miracle was a common every-day experience; a great achievement or stroke of luck was the result of magic, or was attained through the help of some attendant spirit; and all diseases, misfortunes and death were the direct inflictions of the “Evil One.” Nothing was too un-natural, too wonderful, or too mysterious, to

find acceptance; and therefore, nothing was too "irrational" to be incorporated or interwoven with the events and stories of the time.

In all Romance Literature we find this mingling of strange and opposing elements. A real historical fact becomes the centre around which is gathered the fantastic and the impossible; or it forms the motive from which the imagination weaves a transformed picture, accentuating and bringing together the real and the marvellous, the true and the fictitious. "Beowulf" and the "Nibelungenlied," among others, are remarkable instances of this bringing together of mythical and historical elements.

However much we may feel inclined to laugh, or to treat with indifference, these extraordinary and absurd stories of the past, they nevertheless convey to us a truth—a general truth—which we can obtain in no other way. They express the "tone," the character and the spirit of the people among whom they came into being, and to whom they were sung or recited.

Among the multitude of objects, animate and inanimate, which we find were possessed of magic powers or marvellous qualities, many are common to nearly all Romances, although they come from far distant lands and from different people. We find among these objects the Sword, the Hoard or Treasure, and the Ring: the first and the last being more common than others, and naturally so in an age of Chivalry. Let us reverse the above order, taking the Ring first, and concluding with the Sword.

The Ring. The use of the Ring carries us back to the remotest antiquity, and even as a marriage token—although Europe received it from Egypt—its origin is untraceable. With the Ancient Egyptians it gave the wife the charge and care of her husband's property. In modern times the bridegroom still says "with all my worldly goods I thee endow," although it frequently happens that the bride brings the dowry, and that he has no goods of this world with which to endow her.

The heathen nations used the ring as a binding ceremony in making agreements; and as such, it fittingly finds its place as a pledge in the solemn contract of matrimony. We are told that Prometheus invented the ring, that Tubal-Cain was the workman who made it, and that Adam gave it to his son Seth that he might therewith espouse a wife. Beyond this we cannot go.

"The circular form" of the ring "that is round and without end, importeth that the mutual love and affection should roundly flow from one to the other as in a circle, and that continually for ever."

Herrick expresses a similar thought in the "Hesperides." He says:—

And as this round
Is nowhere found
To flaw, or else to sever:
So let our love
As endless prove:
And pure as Gold for ever.

The ring having acquired such an important position in secular and solemn contracts—having become sacred in life and in love, it is not surprising that it appears frequently in Romance, not only as a seal and pledge but moreover as possessing strange and miraculous powers.

In "Morte d'Arthur" we have the Knight Sir Gareth, whose history is an allegory in Romance, similar to Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress," the warfare of the Christian from his birth to his entrance into glory. Sir Gareth has liberated dame Liones from her imprisonment in Castle Perilous. When he is entering the tournament, Liones said unto him, "Sir, I will lend you a ring, but I would pray you as ye love me heartily let me have it again when the tournament is done, for that ring increaseth my beauty much more than it is of itself. And the virtue of my ring is that that is green it will turn to red, that that is red it will turn in likeness to green, and that is

blue it will turn to likeness of white." . . . "Also, who that beareth my ring shall lose no blood, and for great love I will give you this ring."

Of far greater antiquity is the story, told by Herodotus, of Polycrates. His friend Amasis wrote to him in this wise:—"Amasis to Polycrates thus sayeth: It is a pleasure to hear of a friend and ally prospering; but thy exceeding prosperity does not cause me joy, forasmuch as I know the Gods are envious. My wish for myself, and for my friend, is, to be now successful, and now to meet with a check; thus passing through life amid alternate good and ill, rather than with perpetual good fortune. . . . Now, therefore, give ear to my words, and meet thy good luck in this way: bethink thee which of all thy treasures thou valuest most and canst least bear to part with; take it, whatsoever it be, and throw it away, so that it may be sure never to come any more into the sight of man."

Polycrates seeing that the advice of Amasis was good, put to sea, taking with him his signet ring, which was an emerald set in gold, and flung it into the deep. It happened five or six days afterwards, that a fisherman caught a fish so large and beautiful that it was sent to the King's table. The signet ring was found in the belly of the fish, and thus was restored to Polycrates. When Amasis heard of it "he perceived that it does not belong to man to save his fellow-man from the fate which is in store for him."

A similar story is told of a Queen who gave a ring to a soldier for whom she had formed a wrongful attachment. The King obtained possession of the ring, while the soldier slept, threw it into the sea, and then asked the Queen to bring him her ring. In fear and trembling she went to St. Kentigern and told him of her folly. The saint caught a salmon in the Clyde, with the ring in its mouth. He gave it to the Queen, who thus saved her character and her husband.

A Knight once heard the cries of a woman in labour,

and knew the infant was destined to become his wife. When the child had grown to womanhood, he threw a ring into the sea, commanding her never to see him again till she could bring the ring which he had cast away. Shortly afterwards the ring was found in the mouth of a cod-fish. Thus they were married, and, like Polycrates, he escaped not the fate which he had tried to elude.

The wisest of all men has not escaped the magic touch of Romance. Once when Solomon was washing his hands he entrusted his signet-ring to his favourite concubine. Sakhar, or the Devil, assuming the appearance of Solomon, obtained possession of the ring, and sat on the throne as King. Meanwhile Solomon became a beggar. After forty days Sakhar went away, and cast the ring into the sea. It was returned to Solomon in the usual way, in the body of a fish. Solomon returned to the throne, but cast Sakhar into the Sea with a great stone round his neck.

In connection with these piscatorial stories, we must not forget the quaint description, given in the New Testament, of St. Peter finding the Tribute Money in the mouth of a fish. This was a delightfully novel way of paying Government Taxes. We need not wonder that so many have followed the "Gentle Art" of the angle; the wonder is that there have not been more.

From the Chinese Tales of "Corcud and his Four Sons" we have the story of Corcud's Ring. It was composed of four different metals, and insured the wearer success in any undertaking in which he chose to embark. But there was one condition attached to the ring, that when the wearer had chosen himself a wife, he must remain faithful to her as long as she lived. The moment he neglected her for another, he would lose the ring.

Luned's ring, the story of which we find in "The Mabinogion," rendered the wearer invisible. This ring was given by Luned or Lynet to Owain, one of King Arthur's Knights. Owain and the "Black Knight" met in combat. Owain struck him a mortal blow, upon which he

turned his horse's head and fled; Owain followed in hot pursuit. They came to the gate of a vast and resplendent Castle. The Knight was allowed to enter, but the portecullis was let fall upon Owain, and so narrow was his escape, that it cut his horse in two "behind the saddle, and carried away the rowels of the spurs that were upon Owain's heels." Owain was in a perplexing situation; half of his horse was without; he and the other part of the horse were closed between the two gates. It was while he was in this condition that Luned gave him the ring. She said to him, "Take this ring and put it on thy finger, with the stone inside thy hand; and close thy hand upon the stone. And as long as thou concealest it, it will conceal thee." When those in the Castle came to seek Owain, to put him to death, and found nothing but the half of his horse, they were "sorely grieved." The Black Knight died; and Owain married his widow, who was the Countess of the Fountain—"the fairest, and the most chaste, and the most liberal, and the wisest, and the most noble of women."

In the Oriental story of "The Four Talismans," a steel ring has the power of enabling the wearer to read the secrets of another's heart.

A Basque Legend tells us of a ring that could talk, but its vocabulary consisted of five words only. This ring was given by Tartaro, the Basque Cyclops, to the girl whom he wished to marry. Immediately she put it on, it kept saying incessantly, "You there, and I here"—"You there, and I here." To get rid of the nuisance, she cut off her finger, and cast both finger and ring into a pond.

A somewhat similar "ring and finger" story comes to us in Grimm's tale of "The Robber Bridegroom."* The robber—his true character being unknown—has become

* An English form of this story is given in Boswell's "Life of Johnson;" and in "Much Ado About Nothing" Benedick refers to it in the words—"Like the old tale, my Lord, it is not so, nor 'twas not so; but indeed, God forbid that it should be so."

engaged to the beautiful daughter of a miller. She obtains possession of a finger and ring of one of the robber's victims; which lead to his condemnation and execution.

Reynard's ring contained three gems: one *red* which gave light in darkness; one *white* which cured sprains, aches and diseases; and one *green* which would guard the King from every ill in peace and war.

The Betrothal Ring of the Virgin must not be omitted. It would be curious to know where this ring came from, for rings formed no part in ancient Jewish marriage ceremonies. This ring is said to cure the ills of people who merely look at it. It is kept in the Church of San Lorenzo in Perugia, where the greatest care is taken for its safety, and "Fast bind, fast find" seems pushed to a rare extremity. It is first locked in a small leathern case with a golden key kept by the Bishop, and then enclosed in fifteen iron chests, the keys of which are kept by fifteen different trusty persons of the City. The last chest is so heavy that three men can scarcely lift it. The ring is said to have an extraordinary, uncanny appearance, and its colours so various that it is difficult to describe. It is probably made of some rare form of agate.

In ancient Egypt money was made in the form of rings, and it is interesting to note that in "Beowulf," of a date so vastly later, frequent mention is made of "ring" money. This seems to have been a common form of money before the invention of minting.

The philosopher Iarchus by means of a ring was able each day to discover the secrets of nature: and Solomon's ring, already referred to, is said to have told him everything he wished to know; and was therefore the source of his wisdom.

Gyges, shepherd to the King of Lydia, after a great flood, went into a deep cavity in the earth, where he found a ring of surprising virtue, in the body of a brazen horse. The stone rendered him who wore it invisible, or when

pressed towards the palm of the hand, the party could see without being seen. By means of this charm he killed Candales the King, ascended the throne of Lydia, and gained the Queen for his wife.

This ancient story seems to have been the original of many of the Romantic tales of magic rings; such as that of Luned's ring, which rendered Owain invisible.

Whatever may have been the origin of the ring, whether it was accidental or imitative, must remain unsolved; and whether it was first used as an ornament, as a pledge of good faith, as a charm, or as money, must remain a matter of doubt. But it has played a great part for thousands of years in human affairs and in Romance. To-day it is still the sign of the most solemn of all contracts between men and women; and seldom does the lover place the ring on the finger of his betrothed, without his heart throbbing with some feelings of wonder and romance, whether they are expressed or not.

The position of the ring on the hand was said to indicate the calling or character of the wearer. If placed on the thumb,* the wearer was a soldier or a doctor; on the first finger, a sailor; on the middle finger, a fool; on the third, a diligent or married person; and on the little finger, a lover.

The Hoard. In the hoard or treasure of Romance, we come to an element quite as curious and interesting as the ring: although it does not appear so frequently. Legendary lore tells us of mountains which opened on St. John's day, from which white-robed women came forth, and the spell laid upon them, and on buried treasures within, was broken. The treasure house of Ixion, which none might enter without being either destroyed or betrayed by marks of gold or of blood, is the foundation of the story of "Bluebeard."

A real buried treasure, known as the "Cuerdale hoard,"

* Compare the knight in Chaucer's "Squire's Tale."

was found in the valley of the Ribble, near Preston. This treasure, it is said, was often sought by means of the divining rod; and through it a farmer, on one occasion, was induced to deeply plough the whole of a large field, in the hope of finding it. Like so many, who have hoped to become rich by one great effort, he was doomed to disappointment. This treasure had probably remained buried and undisturbed for 900 years or more.

In "Amadis of Gaul" we have a remarkable description of the many treasures of Firm Island, which were won by Amadis and Oriana. In the Second Book we read how the Island was enriched with treasures, and laid under enchantment; and in the final chapter of the Romance we see how Amadis and Oriana were able to enter and win the "Treasure Island." Many conditions were necessary in those who possessed this treasure. The Knight must be excellent in arms and loyal in love, and his dame most beautiful and true. The Island contained a garden, wherein were all kinds of trees, and four treasure chambers. Entrance could only be attained by passing several perrons or pillared archways, made of copper, stone and iron. Over the one nearest the garden was placed "the image of a man made of copper, holding a trumpet in his mouth." No man or woman who had been false in their first love could pass, for the image blew "from that trumpet so dreadful a blast with smoke and flames of fire," that they fell stunned and were cast out as dead. But if Knight, or dame, or damsel came, worthy by virtue of true loyalty to enter, the image "made a sound so sweet, that it was delightful to hear." Many made the attempt, but failed. Some passed the first perron, and some the second, only to be thrown back on approaching the third. After Amadis and Oriana had proved themselves worthy, the enchantments were at an end, and all might freely enter.

Perhaps one of the greatest and most impressive stories of the Hoard is that of the Rhinegold. He who gained

this glittering treasure, and welded it into a ring, would become lord of the wide world.

In this story the two master-passions of humanity—the love of woman and the love of boundless wealth—are brought together in conflict. In the dwarf Alberich, the latter became the stronger. In a fit of frenzy he cries: “Love, I forswear thee ever.” He climbs the Rhinegold rock, tears away the shining treasure, and then vanishes amid the wildest confusion of the elements. He has stolen the treasure-trove, the Rhinegold, from the Rhine-daughters. He forges the gold into a ring, and by its power, compels the Nibelungs to do his bidding. They come laden with gold and silver, which they pile into heaps under his directions. Now Wotan and Loge determine to rob the robber, and possess themselves of the ring by force or subterfuge. These Gods have incurred a debt to their enemies, the Giants Fafner and Fasolt, and they desire the treasure, not to return it to the lawful owners, but to buy back their forfeited youth. Mime, Alberich’s brother, the cleverest smith of them all, has wrought a magic cap out of the Rhinegold, known as the Tarnhelm. This is the equivalent of the helmet of Perseus. Its wearer can become invisible, can assume any form he pleases, as well as travel any distance in a moment of time. Wotan and Loge descend from above; and Alberich, taken unawares, changes himself by means of the Tarnhelm into a serpent and then into a toad. “Catch it, quick!” exclaims Loge to Wotan, who sets his foot on the toad, while Loge tears the magic cap from its head. Alberich is secured by the Gods, who demand that he shall order the Nibelungs to bring the treasures from below. He is compelled to renounce the ring and his hope of ruling the world; but does so with a curse, vowing it shall bring disaster and death to everyone who wears it until it is returned to its rightful possessors. The two giants now appear, and claim their reward. The riches are piled up, but Wotan refuses to part with the ring.

Then the Mother of Fate warns Wotan to give up the ring. He obeys, and throws the bauble on the glittering heap. The giants collect the whole into a huge sack, but they quarrel over possession of the ring, and it ends in Fafner killing Fasolt. Fafner then makes off with the treasure, thus fulfilling the curse. Wotan and the Gods enter Walhalla.

In "Beowulf" we have an early and remarkable instance of buried treasure, the guardian of which was slain by Beowulf, who received his death-wound in the conflict. It was a hoard heaped up in sin: its last lord hid it in an earth cave, and for three hundred years the *great scather* held the cave, until some man, finding by chance a rich cup, took it to his lord. Then the den was searched while the worm slept; again and again when the dragon awoke, there had been theft. He found not the man, but wasted the land with fire, and night was made hideous to the sight of men. This was told to Beowulf, who sought out the dragon's den and fought with him in awful combat. One wound the dragon struck in the flesh of Beowulf. Then, while the warrior sat death-sick on a stone, he sent his thanes to see the cups and the dishes in the den of the dread night-flyer. He said, "I for this gold have wisely sold my life; let others care now for the people's need. I may be here no longer. Now go thou quickly, beloved Wiglaf, . . . now the dragon lies low, sorely wounded, bereft of treasure. Do thou make haste that I may see the ancient wealth, the golden possessions, may well survey the bright curious gems; that because of the treasure-wealth I may more calmly leave my life and lordship which I have long held."

Wiglaf goes, and he saw in the den of the dragon "many treasure jewels, glittering gold lying on the ground, wonders on the walls; beakers standing, vessels of bygone men. . . . There was many a helm, old and rusty, many an arming curiously twined. Treasure, gold in the earth, may easily turn the head of any one of mankind,

hide it who will. Likewise he saw, standing high over the Hoard, an ensign, all golden, greatest of handwrought wonders, riveted together with handcraft; from it there stood out a ray, so that he could see the floor, inspect the treasures throughout. No sign of the Dragon was there, for the sword had done away with him."

The Messenger of Death comes to Beowulf; and we have that pathetic description, powerful because of its natural simplicity, of the death and funeral of the hero. The people raised a mound on the cliff, on the spot of the funeral pyre. In the mound they placed rings and jewels which had been taken from the Hoard. "They left the treasure of earls to the earth to hold—the gold in the ground—where now it remains, as useless to men as it was before!"

There is ample evidence that metals were discovered long prior to the dawn of history; and that man has always attached great value to them. The latter is found even among living savages. When some English sailors gave the South Sea Islanders—discovered by Captain Cook—some iron nails, they immediately planted them hoping to obtain another crop.

The time and labour spent in trying to discover the Philosopher's Stone, which was to transmute all baser metals into gold, are almost mythical.

Two metals have always had for man a special fascination, partly arising no doubt from their rarity, but also from their brightness and lustre—namely, silver and gold. The same fascination has existed regarding jewels and precious stones.

The law of animal evolution shows a gradual climbing up from the lower to the higher, from the simple to the complex, from the good to the better. But with all this upward climbing we have to reckon with natural selection and heredity; and what evolution has failed to do, heredity has abundantly well accomplished; for the love of

silver and gold seems to be as strong as ever it was : if not in the form of money, then in the equivalents of land, bond or scrip. Heredity has given us no checkmate in this.

In "The Mabinogion" the mother of Peredur gave him the following advice :—"Whenever thou seest a Church, repeat thee thy paternoster unto it; and if thou see meat and drink, and none have the kindness to give them to thee, take them thyself. And if thou hear an outcry, proceed towards it, especially if it be the outcry of a woman. If thou see a fair jewel, possess thyself of it," and so forth. Peredur immediately put his mother's words into practice, with what result we need not here follow.

But can we penetrate behind these romantic stories of the hoard? In semi-barbarous and feudal times the masses of the people were of but little account, and wealth or treasure was the possession of very few. It also seems certain that not infrequently treasure would be buried for safety, to prevent theft by a possible victor, and the spot afterwards forgotten. May not the curse cast on the hoard represent the serf's point of view? These are only offered as sporting suggestions, for the magic elements of Romance are too weird and tangled to be translated into common-sense. And it is well that it is so, for were it otherwise, the charm of its suggestions, the verve and spirit of its adventures would vanish.

The Sword. In the days of chivalry perhaps nothing was more highly prized—nothing more eagerly sought after, than a well-tempered, trusty sword. It is amusing to read how every man at arms appears to have been filled with a desire to win his spurs and attain the honour of Knighthood: how every one turned out armed sumptuously *cap-a-pie* in search of adventures: and how, thirsting to try their strength, a challenge to combat was as common as fleshpot and meadcup, harp and song, at the end of day. To be victorious, personal skill and strength were necessary; but even these, without a good sword,

might be of no avail. If the combat was to redress some wrong, then so much the better; if it was to win the hand and heart of some fair, beauteous dame, then so much the better also: and, we find in the finer Romances, that on one side, and that generally the winner, the cause was a good one, and worthy of both the effort and the fearful clashing and shivering of arms and armour.

It is not without significance that the names of so many famous makers of swords have been handed down. These are some of them:—Wieland, “the divine blacksmith,” made *Balmung*, one of Siegfried’s swords; Gallas made *Joyeuse* for Charlemagne; and Roland’s sword *Durandel* was the work of Munifican, and took him three years to make. It is further worthy of note that no excellence of craftsmanship was too great, no precious stone or metal too valuable, for the adornment of these famous weapons. Mystery and magic have gathered around the sword in Romance, as they have around the ring and the hoard.

Attila, the “scourge of God,” received his sword from heaven; and Merlin said, “look well ye keep the scabbard of Excalibur, for ye shall lose no blood while ye have the scabbard upon you.” Some swords possessed the power of healing the wounds which they had inflicted. This charm was worked by placing the stock over the breach.

In the tale of “Branwen the Daughter of Llyr,” we read, “Caswallawn came upon them, and slew six of the men, and Caradawc’s heart broke for grief thereof; for he could see the sword that slew the men, but knew not who it was that wielded it.”*

When all the lords and knights and gentlemen at arms were gathered together in the Castle of Camelot, we are told that there came a damsel, with mantle richly furred, begirt with a noble sword, “whereof the King had marvel, and said, Damsel, for what cause are ye girt with that sword? It beseemeth you not. Now shall I tell you, said

* Compare the “Magic Club” in Grimm’s tale.

the damsel. This sword . . . doth me great sorrow and cumbrance, for I may not be delivered of it but by a knight, but he must be a passing good man of his hands and of his deeds, and without villainy or treachery, and without treason, and if I find such a knight that hath all these virtues, he may draw out this sword out of the sheath." King Arthur assayed to draw it forth but could not, and everyone assayed but also failed. Finally, a poor ragged knight, named Balin, who had been in prison, made the attempt, and drew it forth with the greatest ease.

Hrothgar, King of Denmark, for whom Beowulf slew the monster Grendel, gave Beowulf among other gifts "a mighty treasure sword borne before the hero."

Chaucer tells us in "The Squire's Tale":—

There cam a knight upon a steede of bras,
And in his hand a brood mirour of glas;
Upon his thombe he hadde of gold a ring,
And by his syde a naked swerd hangyng.

Of this sword the knight said:—

This naked swerd that hangeth by my syde
Swich vertu hath that what man so ye smyte,
Thurghout his armure it wol kerve and byte,
Were it as thikke as a branched ook;
And what man that is wounded with the strook
Shal never be hool, til that you list of grace
To stroke hym with the plat in thikke place
There he is hurt; this is as muche to seyn,
Ye mootè with the plattè swerd ageyn
Strike hym in the wounde and it wol close.
This is a verray sooth, withouten glose,
It failleth not whil it is in youre hoold.

In "Amadis of Gaul" whoso was able to draw from the rock an enchanted sword, would be able to gain access to subterranean treasures. Sir Galahad was put to a similar test; he drew from the iron and marble rock the sword which all other knights had failed to release.

Among the many stories of swords few are so impressive and picturesque as that of the sword with which Siegfried slew the Dragon. This weapon was driven in the trunk of a tree up to the hilt; and whoso could draw it forth, should find that "never bare he better sword in hand." With a mighty wrench Siegmund tears the sword from the tree, and cries exultantly, "Nothung! Nothung! name I this sword!" Wotan's spear causes the sword to be shattered, but Siegfried welds the broken pieces once more into a new and better blade. With a mighty stroke he cleaves an iron anvil in twain, and with the same sword slays the dragon Fafner.

Another highly picturesque and weird story is that of the "Green Sword Knight" in "Amadis of Gaul." This bold knight determines to slay the foul monster, Endriago, whom we are told was begotten of the devil's ordinance. Shout said the Knight, to Gandalin, that Endriago may hear thee. It was not long before the monster came bounding over the rocks, "breathing smoke and flames of fire in its fury, and gnashing its teeth and foaming, and ruffling its scales and clapping its wings that it was horrible to see it." Then follows a vivid and circumstantial description of the combat, amid fumes so dense that the knight can scarcely see the monster. The knight thrust his sword so hard that it reached the brain; then he "plucked out his sword and thrust it down its throat till he killed the monster."

But of all the swords of Romance, none awakens our interest so much, none is so dear to us, as the famous Excalibur, the sword of Arthur. That this is so, does not arise so much from the part it plays in the legendary adventures of that Prince, of our own land, but from the remarkable events related thereof in connection with "The Passing of Arthur." Excalibur is an abbreviation of *Ex Calce Liberatus*, liberated from the stone. The story of the sword as related by Malory tells how that none save the rightful King could pluck it out of the great

stone in which it was embedded. One day, when a tournament was held, young Arthur, who wanted a sword, drew it forth, not knowing it was charmed; whereupon he was declared to be the elected King.

This we find near the beginning of the life of Arthur; but at the end we have that marvellous story, a strange mixture of truth and fiction, in which Arthur parts first with his sword, and then himself passes from the scene. Sir Mordred, during Arthur's absence, had tried to usurp the Kingdom and to induce the Queen to marry him. They meet on the battle-field, and engage in combat: Sir Mordred is killed, and King Arthur receives his death wound. The story of this, and of what came before and after, is told by bold Sir Bedivere in Tennyson's "Idylls of the King," and readers of that wondrous poem will know that at the bidding of the dying King, Excalibur was thrown by Sir Bedivere into the great lake, and then (to quote from Malory) "there came an arm and an hand above the water, and met it, and caught it, and so shook it thrice and brandished and then vanished away the hand with the sword in the water."

I have said that these ancient Romances give us the true "tone" of the time and the people. But they also show us, with no uncertain light, that the pulse of humanity has been much the same all the world over, as far back as we can go.

Not only do we find the same passions and the same feelings, but even the miraculous elements of Romance show us the same universal kinship. Who has not looked into the eyes of a child, wide open with wonder, when some fairy or household tale has been told; and seen it accepted without question or doubt? The "make-believe" has always had a peculiar fascination for us. To-day, with all our learning and increasing mastery of nature, we are only children of a larger growth.

It seems certain that most of the irrational and wonder elements in Romance have been handed down from savage

times, age after age; and that they have gradually become more vitalized as morals and modes of life have improved.

We may not go so far as Ben Johnson, and believe that in the times of chivalry:—

. . . Goodness gave the greatness
And greatness worship. . . .

or that "every house became an academy of honour." For we know there was much cruelty, that morals were often low, and that the difference between good and evil was often indistinct. But still, when we remember the unsullied virtue and constancy of Amadis, and the quest of the Sangreal, which runs through "Morte d'Arthur," and which Sir Galahad attained, we see what high ideals, what noble endeavours and achievements were possible.

For these we may take the *Sword* as the Symbol: and we may say of humanity—as it is pictured in Romance in the stories of the Hoard, the Sword, and the Ring—as Sir Bedivere said of King Arthur:—

"From the great deep to the great deep he goes."



TO A NIGHTINGALE.

By the Rev. A. W. Fox.

MINSTREL of even,
Thy soul-trancing lay
Glads the blue heaven,
Where pales the bright day.
Orange glows the west,
All other birds at rest
Thrill, while thou rainest forth thy roundelay.

Pause in their closing
Gay blossoms to list,
Wake from reposing
White stars through the mist.
Behind thee dusky trees
Their whistling homilies
Hush into stillness, while trills eve's lutanist.

Dreamily roaming
Where rustles the brake,
I move through the gloaming,
As thou dost awake
Echo's ringing note
From flowery dells remote,
Till night's dim shadows dimmer darkness take.

Longingly turning
I wend my lone way;
Yet my heart burning
O'erflows with thy lay;
And as thy voice rings best
When darkness veils the west,
So sings, my soul, when through care's gloom I stray.

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